



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

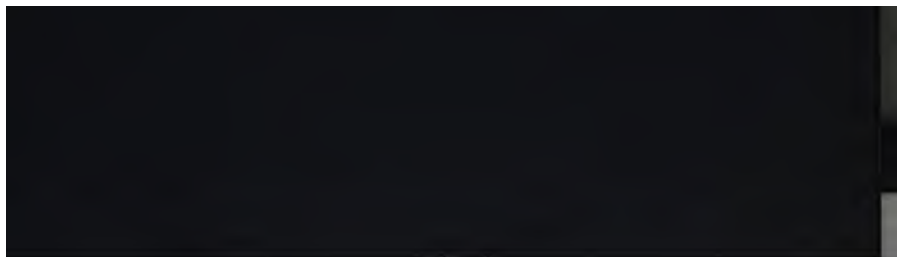
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



1

2

3





*THE VILLAGE PULPIT.*

1

# THE VILLAGE PULPIT,

A COMPLETE COURSE OF 66 SHORT SERMONS, OR FULL  
SERMON OUTLINES FOR EACH SUNDAY, AND SOME  
CHIEF HOLY DAYS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

BY THE

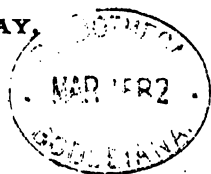
*REV. S. BARING GOULD, M.A.,*

AUTHOR OF "VILLAGE PREACHING FOR A YEAR," "LENT SERMONS ON THE  
MYSTERY OF SUFFERING," "THE PREACHER'S POCKET," ETC.

---

VOL. I.

ADVENT TO WHITSUNDAY.



London:

W. SKEFFINGTON AND SON, 163, PICCADILLY, W.

—  
1881.

100 . c c . 139 .





## PREFACE.

---

Two previous volumes of Village Sermons having been well received, and having been found to meet a want, I have been induced to write a new Series. This collection is not, however, one of Sermons fully worked out, but mere Sketches. I have given the leading lines, or heads, of the discourse, with illustrations and anecdotes, the exhortatory matter I have left undeveloped, as that can be worked out by any preacher who uses my outlines.

The illustrations may, perhaps, be thought sometimes too abundant. I, myself, prefer a single illustration in a Sermon, thoroughly worked out and applied. I have, however, not infrequently given more, so that the preacher who condescends to use this little work will be able, if so minded, to make two Sermons out of one of my Sketches. Not every Sermon is thus overcrowded, but some are.

It is a matter of surprise to me how little the Bible is used as a store-house of illustrative matter. We have the same texts, and the same examples, quoted over and over again, not only by the same preacher, but by hundreds of preachers, so that go where we will, we get the same dishes, only slightly varied in the cooking, just as everywhere in Tyrol one gets only veal, sometimes indeed with *sauce piquante*, but generally *au naturel*, and sometimes sodden and cold.

This monotony is not confined to English preachers. I purchased a little while ago twelve volumes of "Pattern Sermons" of the most illustrious modern preachers of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany, price nearly £3, in the hopes of finding in them—(they furnish about ten Sermons a Sunday)—something useful, some fresh idea, some striking illustration, or telling anecdote; alas! after wading, over ankle, over knee, waist deep, I found mud, nothing but mud. I am sure there are souls, like thin, sandy soil, that are nourished, fattened, and assisted in

grain-producing by having a layer of this material spread well over them weekly, but why should this sort of stuff be published, when it is to be got in abundance everywhere, when the supply is absolutely inexhaustible, when it can be scraped up with a spade everywhere, as it lies deep in every lane?

I believe also that there are other souls to whom this is intolerable, souls that are suffocated under the vapid load, they want ideas, and they are given words. To them a pious, idea-less, discourse is horrible, horrible is not the word for it, for that implies something definite and tangible to inspire horror.

I do not for a moment suppose that this little collection of Sermons will suit all. I know it will not, but I believe it will suit some, and I venture to publish it in the belief that it will do them good.

But to return to what I have said about the Bible. This is an almost inexhaustible treasury of illustration, if it be read through over and over again, and loved as a whole, and not had recourse to only on Sundays for the lessons of the day. The Sunday lessons have had this disadvantageous effect. They have so impressed some 104 Old Testament chapters on the memories of the clergy, that when they want an illustration to their text, or an example for their subject, there rises up before their mind's eye a passage or incident from one of these chapters, and it is at once laid hold of, and no further search is made in the remaining 565 chapters for other and fresher matter. Where there is a daily service, the case is better, more of the Bible becomes familiar to the preacher, and his range is accordingly wider.

I think, however, that we need not confine ourselves to illustrations from the sacred volume. Nature also affords us abundance, and, indeed, here are few books one reads out of which one may not pick something; and perhaps better than books is personal experience.

Again, I believe we can hardly go far wrong in making Bible incidents very real to the people, by graphic description, and I have no scruple in sacrificing archæological exactness and Oriental colouring, if so be that I can bring the Bible story to the level of the experience of a country congregation. In that, the mediævals were right, they painted the heroes of the Bible in mediæval costume, and the people understood them, and made friends of them. I have trespassed myself in this way with my eyes open, and I think there is no harm in doing so, nay, there is positive good.

I believe one of the secrets of the hold Dissenting preachers have on the uneducated is because they thus treat the Bible narratives. I venture—at the risk of raising a laugh—to quote the opening of a Sermon delivered last year in a little Cornish chapel, by a local Primitive Methodist preacher.

I believe that I give his words without exaggeration. I have no wish to exaggerate, for I am holding up the style to my brethren in the Church, as something to copy, though his matter, as they will see, was not quite correct. The text was from Psalm lvi. 8, "Awake up, my glory, awake, psaltery and harp." And this was the opening of the discourse—

"My brethren! King David woke up early in the morning, just as the sun was rising. There had been wretched bad times, rain, rain, rain, all day and night, and the sheep were cawed (diseased), and the harvest was not got in, the shocks of corn were standing, and the grain was sprouting in the ears. You know what sort of bread comes of that. David had been sore at heart, for he knew the farmers were in a bad way, and the labouring people were also not well off. So he got out of bed, and opened the window, and looked out, and smelt the beautiful fresh morning air. Then he saw the sun come a-peeping up over the Eastern hills, like a spark of gold. So says David, There he comes, and not a cloud in the sky, and there's every promise of a good day. Wake up, my glory! Wake up, my beautiful shining luminary, and give us a long fine day, for we want it sore before the corn is utterly spoiled and done for. And then, my brethren, he made another re-mark, and that he addressed to his Possle-tree. Now I don't pretend to know exactly what sort of a tree a Possle-tree is, but travellers who have been in the East, and learned Commentators, do assert that it is a plant that turns her face to the sun, whichever way the sun be. In short, she (the preacher said 'her') is a sort of a convolvulus. Now David saw this convolvulus drooping, with her blossom heavy with dew, and, says he, with a great shout, 'Possle-tree!' says he, 'Possle-tree, my hearty! wake up! The glorious sun is woke and shining, and it becomes you to wake up too, and look the glorious sun in the face, as is your nature to.'"

Now, of course, this is absurd, and rests on an entire misconception of what a psaltery is, but it is very graphic, and all the little congregation perfectly entered into King David's feelings, and saw the whole situation clearly; and when the preacher drew from it a wholesome lesson, it came home to their hearts and understandings.

The preacher should be very careful not to overdo his description, not

at all to trench on the ludicrous, but I do not think he need shrink from occasionally raising a smile by a telling illustration, which he knows will do this. An experienced extempore preacher needs, however, no hint on such a subject, the hint is for young beginners, who are inclined to make points by exaggeration.

In conclusion, I must express my thanks to that kind friend who has corrected the proofs of this work for me, which I have been debarred from doing myself, on account of my absence from England at the time when it was passing through the press.

LEW TRENCHARD,  
DEVON.

S. BARING-GOULD.

---

## CONTENTS.

---

### SERMON I.

#### *SPIRITUAL SLEEP.*

(1ST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

ROM. XIII. 11.

“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”

### SERMON II.

#### *PREPARING FOR CHRIST.*

(2ND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

S. LUKE III. 4.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

### SERMON III.

#### *REEDS.*

(3RD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

S. MATT. XI. 7.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed  
shaken with the wind?”

X.

SERMON IV.

*WHY MEN DO NOT HEAR.*

(4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.)

S. JOHN I. 23.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

SERMON V.

*CHRISTMAS DAY.*

S. JOHN I. 14.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

SERMON VI.

*THE HOLY FAMILY.*

(SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.)

S. LUKE III. 39.

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

SERMON VII.

*CIRCUMCISION AND NEW YEAR.*

EPHES. V. 20.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON VIII.

*EPIPHANY.*

S. MATT. II. 11.

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him."

SERMON IX.

*THE LOSS OF CHRIST.*

(1ST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. LUKE II. 44.

“They sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance—  
and found Him not.”

SERMON X.

*THE WORDS OF MARY.*

(2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. JOHN II. 5.

“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”

SERMON XI.

*GOD'S WONDER.*

(3RD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. MATT. VIII. 10.

“Jesus—marvelled.”

SERMON XII.

*CONFIDENCE.*

(4TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. MATT. VIII. 26.

“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”

SERMON XIII.

*MODERATION.*

(5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. MATT. XIII. 28.

“Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?”



SERMON XIV.

*A WILL TO BE SAVED*

(6TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

S. MATT. XIII. 31.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed.”

SERMON XV.

*IDLERS.*

(SEPTUAGESIMA.)

S. MATT. XX. 6.

“Why stand ye here all the day idle?”

SERMON XVI.

*THE GROWTH OF THE SEED*

(SEXAGESIMA.)

S. LUKE VIII. 11.

“The seed is the word of God.”

SERMON XVII.

*SEEING THE LANDMARKS.*

(QUINQUAGESIMA.)

S. LUKE XVIII. 41.

“What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.”

xiii.

SERMON XVIII.

*THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF.*

(ASH WEDNESDAY.)

1 COR. XIII. 5.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

SERMON XIX.

*THE MANNER OF KEEPING LENT.*

(1ST SUNDAY IN LENT.)

S. MATT. IV. 2.

“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards an-hungred.”

SERMON XX.

*JOY AND SORROW.*

(2ND SUNDAY IN LENT.)

S. MATT. XVII. 3.

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with Him.”

SERMON XXI.

*THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.*

(2ND SUNDAY IN LENT.)

S. MATT. XV. 22.

“O Lord, Thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

xiv.

SERMON XXII.

*THE TALKATIVE SPIRIT.*

(3RD SUNDAY IN LENT.)

S. LUKE XI. 14.

"Jesus was casting out a devil, and it was dumb."

SERMON XXIII.

*THE SLAVISH SPIRIT.*

(4TH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

GAL. IV. 31.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

SERMON XXIV.

*THE SELF-SUFFICIENT SPIRIT.*

(5TH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

S. JOHN VIII. 50.

"I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth."

SERMON XXV.

*MERCY AND JUSTICE.*

(PALM SUNDAY.)

S. MATT. XXI. 5.

"Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek"

SERMON XXVI.

*FAT AND LEAN KINE.*

(MAUNDY THURSDAY.)

S. JOHN XIII. 2.

"Supper being ended."

SERMON XXVII.  
*SHIFTED RESPONSIBILITIES.*

(GOOD FRIDAY.)

S. MATT. XXVII. 4.

"What is that to us? See thou to that."

SERMON XXVIII.  
*THAT WHICH LIVES.*

(EASTER DAY.)

S. MARK XVI. 6.

"He is risen; He is not here."

SERMON XXIX.  
*THE TWIN-BROTHER OF THOMAS.*

(1ST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

S. JOHN XX. 24.

"Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus."

SERMON XXX.  
*BESSETTING SINS.*  
(2ND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

S. JOHN X. 16.

"Other sheep I have."

SERMON XXXI.  
*CHILDREN OF GOD AND OF THE WORLD.*

(3RD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

S. JOHN XVI. 20.

"Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

SERMON XXXII.  
*A CHILD-LIKE SPIRIT.*  
(4TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

S. JOHN XV. 10.  
"I go to My Father."

SERMON XXXIII.  
*COMMON PRAYER.*  
(5TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

S. JOHN XVI. 24.  
"Ask, and ye shall receive."

SERMON XXXIV.  
*THE VEILED PRESENCE.*  
(ASCENSION DAY.)

ACTS I. 9.  
"The cloud received Him out of their sight."

SERMON XXXV.  
*TRUTHFULNESS.*  
(SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION.)

S. JOHN XV. 26.  
"The Comforter—whom I will send unto you from the Father,  
even the Spirit of Truth."

SERMON XXXVI.  
*DISCIPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*  
(WHITSUNDAY.)

S. JOHN XIV. 26.  
"The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name,  
He shall teach you all things."

## I.

### *SPIRITUAL SLEEP.*

#### **1st Sunday in Advent.**

---

ROM. XIII. 11.

"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

**Introduction.**—A new Church Year ! With the Church the year does not begin with the first of January, but with Advent Sunday. It is quite a modern thing with us, in England, to regard the year as beginning with January. If you were to look in old parish registers and account books you would find that a little over a hundred years ago the New Year began with Easter. It was inconvenient to have a moveable New Year's day, and so the Government decided to make January 1st the beginning of the year.

But with the Church the New Year opens on Advent Sunday. The new ring of festivals and fasts begins,

bringing with them offers of blessings to Christian souls. And now the Church comes, like a mother to the bedside of her sleeping children, and says in loud cheerful voice,—“Wake ! children, wake ! Soon the sun will be up, and the day begun with its round of duties, so no more sleep, no more dreaming of the hours away. Wake, Christians, wake, and see what is prepared for you !”

I have got a picture of a mother sitting by her child's crib at night decking a Christmas tree. The little thing lies with folded hands and closed eyes fast in pleasant dream ; and the mother is looking tenderly at the sleeper whilst her fingers are engaged in hanging rosy apples, and gilded nuts, and many a pretty toy, on the tree. When the morning comes, and it is time to rise, the morning of Christ's glorious Nativity, the mother will stand by the crib, and with smiling face touch her child and call, “Wake, little Christian, wake ! and see what your mother has prepared for you—now, indeed, it is high time to awake out of sleep, if you will gather from the tree the beautiful fruit your mother has hung there for you.”

My brethren ! the Christian Year is like a Christmas tree hung all over with goodly fruit and shining lights—the precious fruit of spiritual nourishment, the shining lights of holy example, there is Christmas with its fruit of Christ incarnate, and the Circumcision with the fruitful lesson of obedience, there is Lent with the bitter fruit of

contrition, and Good Friday with its fruit of sharpest gall, and there is Easter with the fruit of joyous resurrection, and Ascension with the promise of Heaven opened, and Pentecost shaking down on us the manifold fruits of the Spirit. So now, on Advent Sunday, the Church—the Mother of us all—comes to us and says: “Awake! the night is far spent, the day is at hand; come and gather of what I have prepared for you; dream away the hours no more. Time is too precious thus to be wasted; now is high time to awake out of sleep.”

**Subject.**—The condition of too many Christians is one of sleep.

1. In the first place, let me assure you that the *state of sin is one of sleep*, and that the urgent cry of the Church in Advent, aye, at all times of the year, to the sinner is, Now—now is high time to awake out of sleep, before the everlasting night settles down—the night of death when no man can work out his salvation, the night on which no sun will ever rise. In the epistle for to-day S. Paul compares the state of sin to that of darkness and slumber or nightly riot. Our salvation, he says, is stealing on like the faint feeble beams of early morning light, waxing whiter and brighter every moment. How has the long night been passed? how will the day find us?—spent in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in fighting and quarrelling over our cups, or in heavy dead sleep? What! shall the sun go



up and find us haggard and fevered from debauch, or still drowsing on our beds?

There is an Eastern story some of you may remember. It has been dramatised by our great poet.

A Khalif found a drunken cobbler lying in a ditch, a wretched, disreputable, coarse-minded sot. The Khalif had him carried to his palace, his rags taken off him, and costly robes thrown about him. When the man awoke, he was on the royal couch, surrounded by obsequious servants. He rubbed his eyes and looked about him, and could hardly believe his senses. The servants and courtiers attended and persuaded him that he was indeed the Khalif, and that his past squalid life had been a dream. Then the man was glad and gave orders, and ate and drank and made merry till evening, when he drank himself drunk and was laid on the bed unconscious. Thereupon the Khalif had him stripped of his royal apparel, and his old rags put on him again, and the man taken out and thrown where he had been found, in the kennel. Then, when in the morning the sleeper awakened, he thought that his royal pomp,—the day of great things when plenty and power were in his hand—was but a dream of the night.

In such a condition is the man who sleeps in sin. His life is a dream. The dreamer thinks he is in a different situation from that in which he really is. He thinks he is awake, whilst in reality he is asleep. He thinks he sees,

but he sees nothing but fantastic forms conjured up by the imagination. He thinks he hears, but he hears nothing. He thinks he is talking sensibly, whereas his tongue is tied. He thinks he is eating when he is hungry, rich when he is poor, strong when he is weak, well when he is sick. He has everything in his dream, and when he has slept his sleep he wakes, and finds that he has retained nothing. This is precisely the condition of the sinner. A merry life in this world is all he cares for. The enjoyment of the present, not permanent good things, is what he aims after.

II. But *there is also the sleep of indifference*, as well as that of sin. This is a sort of half-sleep. Those in this condition admit all the truths of religion, acknowledge that they are called to serve God, that life is short and eternity is long, but yet, for all that, cannot rouse themselves to activity. They let the time slip by, and do nothing. The sun shines into their eyes, but does not thoroughly awaken them to the realities of life. But life is given us to work in, to work in energetically, to work out our salvation in, not in a dreamy, half-conscious, listless way, but with energy and perseverance. S. Paul likens life to a race, and who could run a race in a state of somnolence? The work of following Christ is a hard one, it is also a painful one. Christ has strewn the path with thorns, to prick our feet and rouse us, He has laid His cross on our shoulders that the pain may keep us awake, to prevent us from dropping out of consciousness

of what we are, whither we are going, what we have to do.

You have seen, I daresay, as I have, sleepers who cannot be roused. You called to them in vain, you shook them and they would not awake, you held the light to their eyes, but they seemed insensible to it, or only closed them the closer to shut it out.

How true is it to-day as it was of old, "Men love darkness rather than light." They love it, that they may dream on in it.

**Conclusion.**—Then now this Advent Season comes, a time of special call, to arouse all to new life—all who are sleeping the sleep of sin, or sleeping the sleep of indifference. The night is far spent, the day is at hand:—The time of drawing near to God, the time of gathering precious fruit unto eternal life, the time of moulding our lives after the likeness of the Saviour, the time of earning grace and working in the vineyard, is here. Then, brethren, I say—"Now is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

---

## II.

### *PREPARING FOR CHRIST.*

**2nd Sunday in Advent.**

---

S. LUKE III. 4.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

**Introduction.**—There is a remarkable saying of St. Augustine, which deserves to be committed to memory. "He who made you without you, and redeemed you without you, will not save you without you."

Do you catch his meaning? Perhaps not at first, for it is contained in so few words in such a paradoxical form. This is what he means. God who without your concurrence brought you into existence, and who without your concurrence in any way planned and executed the glorious work of redemption, yet, in having given you a free will, has debarred Himself from saving you without your

voluntary consent, and your co-operation with grace.

So, when S. John the Baptist came and preached, his mission was to arouse the Jews to the sense of their need of Christ, that they might with free will come to Him and be saved. God would not, could not, save them unless they consented to accept the way of salvation, and in His infinite mercy He sent the Baptist to prepare their hearts to receive the great revelation which was to burst on them.

**Subject.**—Now, before Christ comes again, His way must be prepared. Man must make ready to receive Him. How that is to be done is pointed out by the Prophet Isaiah ; and S. John the Baptist quotes his words and applies them to his own teaching. They are as necessary now as then, they apply as well now before the second, as then before the first coming, of Christ. Isaiah says, “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places shall be made smooth.”

Here are four points. We must notice them—for in noticing and acting on them, we shall be able to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to make His paths straight.

1. “*Every valley shall be filled.*” You must understand that the prophet is speaking in an allegorical manner. He is not speaking of what is actually going to

take place. No valleys were really levelled up, and mountains thrown down, before Christ appeared on earth, nor will they be so before His second coming. The prophet is giving spiritual advice, he is telling the chosen people what they must do before they can be fit to receive the Messiah. After the manner of a poet, he uses figurative language, and so we must take it, and try to find out what he means.

Now I do not think this is very hard. Of course this figurative language sounds somewhat fantastic to us matter-of-fact and sober Englishmen, but we must remember that it is common to all Eastern people to use allegorical expressions, instead of saying point-blank in so many words what they mean.

Well then :—what is meant by the filling up of every valley? I think this. The prophet by “valley” means low and grovelling tastes, in one word, the carnal appetite, the craving for all that is coarse and animal, and of the earth, earthy. He means all that is forgetful and neglectful of the higher nature and vocation of man, all hunting after low pleasures, all vulgar and degrading pursuits. He says, then—in his figurative and picturesque way,—you have no right to expect Christ to come to you so long as you mind carnal things, for the carnal mind is at enmity with God. If you wish to make ready for Christ’s coming, then you must cover up, and bury and trample down all that is animalish and coarse in your tastes and pleasures.

You must live for the spirit, and mortify the deeds of the body. ,

II. "*Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.*" What is the meaning of that? That also, I think, is not difficult to be understood. The prophet says, If you are to make a highway for your God, if you are going to make ready for your Lord, then down with all pride, self-conceit and self-sufficiency. Humility is the only attitude of the soul that is proper for His reception. It was pride which cast Satan out of heaven, it was pride which blinded the Jew to the reception of Christ at His first coming, and pride will stand in the way of receiving Him meetly when He comes again. It is easy enough for us to satisfy ourselves that we are not proud. But we may have an unnecessarily high opinion of ourselves, be very tenacious of our own opinions, be very full of self-assurance, and self-consciousness. All these are the little hills or buttresses of the great mountain Pride, and they must come down and be brought very low, or there will be no proper spirit in you to receive Christ.

III. "*The crooked shall be made straight.*" If I do not much mistake, here the prophet is condemning the crabbed, discontented, querulous temper; in a word, perversity. This was the temper of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the temper that was always breaking out in murmuring and even rebellion; the temper which excluded all those who went out of Egypt with Moses

from seeing the Promised Land. It is an eminently unloveable temper. It is always dissatisfied with what God has given it, always finding fault with what fellow-creatures are doing. Always wrong itself and a torment to others. The prophet says—Such an odious perverse spirit is utterly distasteful to Christ ; rejoice in the Lord always, and be cheerful and satisfied with what He disposes, and eager to make the best of everything. Christ will come half way to meet the cheerful spirit, but He will not come near the wayward and perverse.

iv. *And the rough ways shall be made smooth.*" Here the prophet, as I understand him, exhorts to courtesy, to that kindly and yielding temper which constitutes true gentility. He says—When Christ comes, He does not expect to find His people rude and insolent and boorish in their manners, resenting slights, refusing to give honour where honour is due, bragging that one is as good as another, elbowing others out of their road, loud in self-assertion, and clamorous for recognition, but He looks that all the roughnesses of such low, coarse, under-breeding shall be done away with. Self-respect is never lost by the showing of respect to others. Regard is never acquired by self-assertion ; Love never won by insolence. Let the rough ways be made smooth. Go to school and learn good manners. Boorishness will be out of place in heaven, courtesy is the essential evidence of a true Christian spirit. God's people must have some social polish of manner—not the exterior varnish which society is con-



tent with, but the courtesy which springs from Christian love, before Christ can come and take up His abode with them. He was with the wild beasts in the wilderness for forty days at His first coming, and He does not desire to dwell with wild beasts for all eternity when He comes again.

**Conclusion.**—Then, my brethren, you have your lesson, preached to you by the Prophet Isaiah and the great forerunner John. Let every valley be filled, and every mountain and hill be brought low, the crooked be made straight, and the rough ways be made smooth,—and then—but not till then, shall men be fit to see the salvation of God.

---

### III.

## REEDS.

### 3rd Sunday in Advent.

---

S. MATT. XI. 7.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?”

**Introduction.**—We are told in the Gospel for to-day that the disciples of John the Baptist came to Our Blessed Lord with the question, “Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” Christ gave them an answer. He bade them consider His words and works, and go and repeat to their master what they had heard and seen. And He added the important words, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”

That is to say, He gave these men every opportunity of judging whether He was the Christ or not, whether He

was the long-expected Messiah or not. They were to search the Scriptures and see whether He fulfilled what was foretold by the prophets, and then—when their reasons were convinced—that was not all, there was something more, they were to shew that they had the courage to openly profess their convictions. “Blessed is”—He said—“not he who believes in Me, but, blessed is he, who believing is not offended in Me, is not, that is, ashamed to confess Me before men.”

And now, as these men departed, with His mind on human weakness and timorousness in professing openly the convictions of the heart, our Lord said to the multitudes, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? No, that would never have drawn you from your homes and usual vocations. What drew you out of yourselves, and brought you by a sort of irresistible power into the wilderness was something very different from those men who have opinions about which they are not positive, and beliefs which they do not care to act upon—no—it was that phenomenon—a man who had the courage to speak out what he thought, cost what it might, and to act on his convictions and suffer for them.

**Subject.**—The only real moral power influencing the world is courage in acting up to our convictions.

1. There are a good many reeds in the world shaken

by the wind. A good number of wavering, weak, unreliable souls, which bend this way and that and stand steady to nothing. There is not only a plentiful crop of reeds in the world, but they grow thick in every parish, in every congregation. That is a bad field which is full of rushes, and that is a bad society in which the reeds grow luxuriantly.

There are not only a good number of reeds, but there are several kinds of reeds. They all belong to the same weak-backed order, but there are some four families in which they may be sub-divided.

1, The irresolute ; 2, the backsliding ; 3, the frivolous ; 4, the timorous.

1. The *Irresolute*. I must describe to you this sort of reed,—this good-for-nothing plant in the Lord's field whose place is wanted for something better. The irresolute soul is that which never can be got to take a decided line. It is quite aware that it ought to give up some bad habit, to adopt a more earnest course, to fully repent of a weak and wasted, if not an evil past, and to put the foot firmly down in the new way—and say decidedly, "This is the right road, and I will walk in it." It puts off true repentance, it puts off thinking seriously, it puts off preparation for the Holy Communion. It has got a full flowery head of good intentions, but they all blow away in the wind.

2. The *Backsliding*. This is another vexatious reed,—one the Priest of God has a great deal of trouble with and very little satisfaction. He never can rely on it. With the best purpose, the least breath of temptation blows it down. The soul is sincere in its weak and watery way, a good, pious soul, with a desire to do what is right, but never able to stand alone, always tumbling down for want of a prop. To come across a temptation is simply to give way to it. The power of resistance seems foreign to the nature of this soul. If it would only run away from temptation, but it is too feeble of purpose or irresolute of will to do even this. Such souls are ever ready on Sunday to confess they have erred and strayed like lost sheep, and to run wild and err and stray to any extent before next Sunday, when they are ready again with their penitential confession. These souls never get better, stronger, more masculine, they are always frail and feminine.

3. The *Frivolous*. This is even a more mischievous reed than the last. The frivolous mind is unable altogether to form a serious purpose, and to take a grave view of its responsibilities. It is thinking of bonnets and ribbands, or the last new novel, or some fresh acquaintance, and never enters into itself. The frivolous mind is a mind outside the person. There is only emptiness within, and the mind is occupied with nothing but externals. The winds that blow these reeds about are fashion, folly, pleasure.

4. The *Timorous*. This is a weak little rush, harmless, not noxious. The timorous soul never does any great things, because it does not rely enough on the Grace of God, it feels its own weakness, and makes that an excuse for doing nothing. It will not undertake a duty, lest it should not have strength to go on with it. It will not draw nearer to God in prayer and Sacraments, lest it should not be able to live up to a closer spiritual walk with God.

II. Now, as I said before, no good is done by reeds. They cumber the ground. The only moral influence that has any effect is exercised by those who have the courage of their convictions.

What is the victory, the Apostle asks,—that overcometh the world?—even our Faith. Not a faith such as S. Peter's, ready to yield when asked by a servant-maid whether he was Christ's disciple, but like that of S. Peter and S. John after Pentecost, when commanded by the rulers not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus, they answered "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

It was a strong faith shown by uncompromising action, it was the "great boldness" of the Apostles that conquered them, and the Cross. It was the wonder inspired by the confidence and assurance of the martyrs which made the heathen flow into the Church. It was because

the great missionaries of ancient times thoroughly believed in what they taught, and were ready to defy kings, and confront savage people, and die for their faith, that the word of God spoken by them so mightily grew and prevailed.

And, if Christianity is to be anything in our country, if it is to be a living power at all, we must be ready to show forth our faith by our works, to maintain it, not to be ashamed of our Christian profession, but to glory in it.

A weak-kneed, faltering, apologetic faith will never gain converts, will never encourage others ; but an earnest, living, vehement faith in these days is as powerful as ever.

**Conclusion.**—Now lastly : The first thing children do is to ask questions. All our life long we are asking questions, and finding out a great deal by enquiring into matters of which we know little. Suppose we begin now with ourselves, and begin to question ourselves, and ask of ourselves, whether we—perhaps—be not reeds shaken in the wind ; and if so, what sort of reeds we are, and lastly, whether we are not reclaimable reeds.

---

#### IV.

### *WHY MEN DO NOT HEAR.*

**4th Sunday in Advent.**

---

S. JOHN I. 23.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

**Introduction.**—A striking story is told of one of the saints (S. Francis of Girolamo). One cold night when he was warm in his humble room, he felt in his heart a great yearning to be of good to some poor souls by speaking to them the word of life. He nestled closer to the fire, and took up a spiritual book and read, but stronger than ever came the impulse on him. He went to the window and looked out, it was deep night, the stars were shining in the sky, and a cutting wind was sweeping through the deserted streets. Every church was shut, all those who had homes were within doors and



preparing for rest. Yet still the longing was strong in him—so strong as at length to become irresistible, and forth he went, wrapped in his cloak, into the cold wind and empty streets. He went on. At last he came to a street corner where was a step and a blank wall. He stood on the step and began to preach. There was no one stirring. He looked up and down the street and no one came, yet he spoke on earnestly. Then when he had done his sermon he went home, wondering at himself and at the profitless work he had done.

Next day there came a tap at his door. It opened, and in came a woman. She had lived in sin, a careless, godless life ; and as she had been about to go to sleep last night she heard a voice outside her window speaking. She listened, and she heard an earnest appeal to impenitent souls to turn from their evil ways, and come to Christ and be healed. She could not sleep after that, the words were burnt into her heart, and in the morning she sought the man of God to ask him to guide her in the way of amendment, and through the gate of true repentance.

**Subject.**—S. John the Baptist says of himself, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He was a special preacher of repentance, and what he said of himself every preacher of repentance after him may say as well. Indeed, the Church, herself, is ever calling to her children to turn from their evil ways and come to God,

but her voice is that of one crying in the wilderness: Men stop their ears and hie away, and leave her to speak to bare walls. Now what is the reason why the call to repentance is not heard, or, if heard, produces so little or no effect?

I will give you the answer to this.

1. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Now in order that any one may hear a call, it is first necessary that he should be *alive*. In order that a man may be able to hear the spiritual appeal he must have a spiritual life in him. You all know that this spiritual life was given you at Baptism, that then you were given an inner and heavenly life, as well as an external and carnal existence. Your soul was quickened with the Divine life, a life that is supposed to be cultivated, nourished and to grow. In a good many of you the cultivation is very rude, the nourishment given it next to none at all, and the growth is scarce perceptible, perhaps at a standstill altogether. Still there it is. The life is there, only feeble. The tender shoot is awake, but waits for the warm breath of God to blow over the soil, when it will burst into light and shoot upward, expand and flower.

So long as the life is there, there is hope. The voice crying in the wilderness may at some time rouse that sluggish soul. But it is quite possible, though we trust it seldom happens, that the life may be extinguished, the Divine fire quenched. The Spirit of God, we know, will not

always strive with man, and by man's persistence in defiance may be compelled to quit the soul, then there is a death indeed. The conscience no longer stirs, sin is no longer dreadful, holiness no longer attractive. When the Spirit of God is gone from the soul it is dead, and the voice of the preacher may cry all day long and never wake it, for the faculty of hearing a spiritual call no longer exists.

II. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

It is quite possible that the call to repentance may not be heard by a person if he *stand too far off*. I do not very well see how a soul is to awake to the necessity of repentance and a renewed life if it keep at a distance from all spiritual influences. There are some souls which particularly dislike and avoid all that is likely to stir them out of their humdrum routine. These persons go on in a sort of easy content with themselves, never advancing, and perhaps slowly retrograding. They dislike every appeal to their consciences, keep away from special services, avoid everything that is conducive to spiritual growth, and so make no progress whatever, never examine their own consciences, except after the manner of dissemblers with God, and so never know how their spiritual affairs stand. They stand so far off, that the voice of the preacher of repentance has no chance of reaching their ears.

III. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

There is another reason why it is not heard—because of

*deafness.* Every preacher who has spoken the Word of God to his people for a long course of years, has come across old folks who say to him, "Ah, Sir! we used to hear you beautifully, but you don't speak as loud and as distinctly as you did twenty years ago."

Then the preacher answers, "My good friends, you have made a mistake. I preach louder than of old and quite as distinctly; but you do not hear as well,—your ears are become hard of hearing." And the complainer says, "I believe you are right, Sir! Time flies, and I suppose I don't hear as readily as of old. I am getting on in years." Now listen to this! Is not this exactly like certain spiritual cases. Does not *habit* make dull ears? Is it not the fact that a good number of people will go on listening to sermons, to earnest appeals to their conscience, till a good rousing exciting discourse becomes a sort of necessity to them—it does them not a bit of good, it just scratches their conscience pleasantly, and they stretch out and purr, and then coil themselves to sleep again.

It becomes such a habit to hear stirring appeals and never to act on them, that—no, not an angel from heaven, shouting with a voice of thunder, would make them take any active steps to amend thier lives, and do works meet for repentance.

iv. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." And I will give you another reason why the voice is not heard. Some people are *talking to others*, and so cannot

hear. There is so much to be done ; so much to think about ; so much to discuss, concerning the everyday round of life; the business and pleasures, the cares and distractions of the work-a-day world, that the preacher of repentance cannot get a chance to speak, so as to be heard ; the ear is never open to listen to him, it is always filled with the voices of the world ; the hum of business ; the strife of tongues ; the gossip about other folks affairs ; the news of the day ; the price of stocks ; the petty trifles and scandals of the neighbourhood, that it cannot listen to the voice speaking to the inner man, calling away from the round of work to the wilderness, to solitude and self-inspection, repentance and communion with God.

---

V

*CHRISTMAS DAY.*

---

S. JOHN I. 14.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

**Introduction.**—How many beautiful pictures of love do we obtain in Holy Scripture. Jacob loved Rachel, and out of the hope of winning her he served for seven years in the house of Laban, “and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her.”

Jonathan bore so tender a love for his friend David that it knew no jealousy, though he was aware that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to David. And when David was in peril, Jonathan stripped his own raiment from off him, and put it upon his friend.

I will quote no more, these two will suffice for to-day.

**Subject.**—The Love of Christ manifested by the Incarnation :—this is the topic on which I am going to speak.


1. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to take human flesh upon Him, to be incarnate in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, to be born at Bethlehem and live thirty and three years among men, and finally to suffer death upon the Cross. That love for the world was shared by the Son. With desire He desired to see the hour when He should enter the world. With desire he desired to see the hour when He should institute His Sacrament to be the perpetual bond between Him and His faithful. With desire He desired the cross, the nails, the spear, that He might make His soul an offering for sin, and redeem those who had become alienated from God. With desire He desired to see the hour when He should rise from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. With desire He desired to see the hour when He should ascend into Heaven and throw open the gates for all to follow.

Like Jacob, He had come from His far off home, and His Father who had sent Him forth with His blessing ; and, like Jacob, He had come to take unto Himself a bride, even the Church. "Christ," says S. Paul, "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it ; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ;

but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is the Church which is to be married to the Lamb, the Church which during her sojourn on earth maketh herself ready. "And to her," says S. John, "was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The Church, then, is the beloved Bride of Christ. It was for her He served—not as Jacob seven years, and then another seven—but thirty-three, for her He not only served, but suffered and died, He purchased her to Himself with His own Blood.

You have, no doubt, heard the opinion that our Lord recited the whole of the 22nd Psalm on the Cross, from the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," and the succeeding Psalms, down to the fifth verse of the 31st Psalm, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," during the hours of darkness. If so, and I think it very probable, look at the 22nd Psalm, and see what were the thoughts and consolations of the heart of Christ. After the long lament over His desolation, suddenly a light springs up: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee: O praise the Lord ye that fear Him: magnify Him, all ye seed of Jacob, and fear Him all ye seed of Israel . . . . My praise is of Thee in the great congregation.





All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him. My seed shall serve Him, they shall be counted unto the Lord as a generation." His mind turns to the Church, to the congregation of faithful souls, to His Bride whom He has loved, for whom He has served, and whom He has won.

Verily! when He had served thirty and three years for the Church, they seemed unto Him but a few days, for the love He had to her!

II. The love of Christ is so great for humanity, that He, like Jonathan, divested Himself of His glory and honour, that He might clothe us, and exalt us to be sons and heirs of His kingdom. He came from Heaven, He laid aside His glory, He humbled Himself to poverty and nakedness, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant—what for? That He might take off from us the filthy raiment of our transgressions, and throw over us the glorious garment of His pardon, that He might take us by the hand and lead us before His Father, and present us as His adopted brethren, heirs of Heaven, joint-heirs with Christ.

**Conclusion.**—And now, lastly, is there not something for us to learn as to our own selves for this great exhibition of the Love of God to us? Yes, surely. First, let us try to love Him Who hath first so loved us, and secondly, let us try to show it, by our love to the brethren. We are

accustomed to look at the bad, unpleasant side of human nature, and to take a very desponding view of it. But we have no right to do so. With all its weakness, its ungraciousness, its meanness, its many unlovelinesses, Christ so loved it that He cast aside His glory and came down and took that nature on Him, because He would not, He could not, despair of it.

And again. The Church is full of imperfections, it is not so spotless and without wrinkles as we expect ; we see scandals and blemishes, worldliness and apathy in her, and we lose heart, we lose faith, we lose love for the Church. Let us not do so. Christ never did. He served thirty-three years for her, He suffered for her, He died for her, and those years, those sufferings, that death, seemed unto Him but a few days, as nothing, for the love that He had to her.

---

## VI.

### *THE HOLY FAMILY.*

#### *Sunday after Christmas.*

---

S. LUKE III. 39.

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

**Introduction.**—When the days of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mother were accomplished, after the birth of Christ, she and S. Joseph brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord in the temple, and that she might offer a sacrifice according to the Law, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. And when she and Joseph had performed all things as appointed by the Mosaic commands, they returned to Galilee, to Nazareth, where Joseph had his carpenter's shop and little cottage, and his regular work. There, in that quiet home, in the midst of honest toil and absence of all luxuries, and

gentle content with a humble lot, the child Jesus grew up.

**Subject.**—I think we may look on the picture of the Holy Family as the type of domestic life, and learn from this peaceful home, what those things are which give to domestic life its happiness and beauty.

Let us then look at this picture, and see what we may gather from it.

1. The first element of happy domestic life,—that which we may be sure existed at Nazareth in that carpenter's home, was *mutual love*.

How deep and tender must have been the love of Jesus for His Mother, for her whom of all the daughters of Eve had alone been found worthy, through her perfect purity, and simplicity, and gentleness, and humility, to become the temple of the Holy Ghost, and elected to be the Mother of God incarnate. We may be well assured that in her the womanly nature had reached its very highest perfections; and that nature, in its exquisite sweetness, and self-forgetfulness, and innocence, and refinement, is one that must attract and enchain love. And if Jesus loved her, of a certainty she loved Him with that perfect devotion which is to be seen in a mother for her child. How the mother hangs on every word, and watches every look, and cherishes every caress, of her child; she admires it above every other child, she is jealous of it, she is ever thinking of it, solicitous for it,

working for it, wearing herself out for it. What then must have been the love of Mary for Jesus, when she knew that this her Son was no ordinary child, but her God made in the likeness of man, her Lord who had deigned to draw His life-blood from her veins. And think of the love of Joseph for his virgin wife, and for his foster-child. How the old man must have cherished the delicate and tender bride and the beautiful infant, wondering in his heart at the revelations made him, of the honour conferred on him from on high to be chosen as her protector, and as the nursing-father of the Saviour of the world.

II. The second characteristic of the Holy Family, and of all happy domestic life, is *mutual respect*. This characteristic stands closely allied to the former. There can be no true love without esteem. A love that is not based on respect blazes up and dies out rapidly. It is a sudden passion, not a lasting affection. Can you not imagine the respect for one another in that holy family at Nazareth? Mary's regard for Joseph, and the high honour and reverence with which he treated her who had been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as the Ark was covered with the Shekinah, the Cloud of Glory consecrating for ever to the Lord? And surely Jesus looked on the grey head of Joseph, and his furrowed brow, and hard hands with reverence, for honest toil is ever deserving of honour, and God honoured it when He became obedient to the poor Carpenter of Nazareth.

Now, in domestic life there can be no better security for the continuance of love than the maintenance of becoming respect between the members. The courtesies of life are not to be laid aside when you close your door upon you. The husband should shew honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and admire those admirable qualities which, however obscured by faults, still do exist in her; in like manner, the wife has no right to expect the countenance of her husband's love if she be captious and querulous; she must shew him due deference, and make allowance for his shortcomings, and be on the look-out for his good points, and shew that she esteems them. And it is most important that the children should be taught from earliest youth to show their parents honour, should rise up when they enter the room, notice them with respect when they meet abroad, address them with deference, and be quiet in their presence. Unless the children be taught to show respect to their parents, their love for them will speedily evaporate, and may change for indifference, perhaps even contempt.

III. The third characteristic of the Holy Family, and of all happy domestic life, is *mutual sympathy*. We get a little glimpse of the mutual sympathy of Joseph and Mary, in the only recorded incident of the boyhood of Christ. They had gone up to Jerusalem to the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, they returned, but the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. When

Joseph and Mary were aware of their loss, they were filled with anxiety, and sought Him first among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and then returned together to Jerusalem, both troubled, both sorrowing, And so, we cannot doubt it was with everything that affected each other, all entered into the others' troubles. Of the sympathy of Jesus I need not speak, it was exhibited in manhood and was not deficient in childhood.

There are few things more chilling in domestic life than an unsympathetic temper, than a want of readiness to enter into, understand, and try to redress the troubles of the other members of the family. Want of sympathy generally springs from selfishness, from being too much wrapped up in self to care to think of, care for, and take trouble about the affairs of others. If there be these cold, ungenial spirits in the house, the elements of enduring happiness are disturbed.

iv. The fourth characteristic of the Holy Family, and of all happy domestic life is *unity*. Now, when there is love and respect and mutual sympathy, there must be a large degree of unity, but I can hardly understand that unity being perfect—indeed I think it wants its sure basis—if there be not oneness of Belief. Joseph, Mary and Jesus are represented to us twice only in Holy Scripture, after the Nativity, and then in both cases they go together to the Temple.

Mixed Marriages, where one believes one thing and one

another, one goes to Church and another to Chapel, or one has no faith at all, and another is a humble Christian, cannot be perfect in unity, for the only abiding unity is in God and in his Church.

---



## VII.

### *CIRCUMCISION AND NEW YEAR.*

---

EPHES. V. 20.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Introduction.**—The old year has come to an end. The finger of time has advanced another hour on the clock of our earthly life. For some of us it points near to the last number, at which will strike the call to eternity. So Time passes. The year that is gone will never return ; the hours lost to God and Heaven are lost for ever ; the days, the months, the years sweep past like a mighty stream, bearing before them all that is cast in, to the vast unfathomed ocean of eternity.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Time is gone by for all of us. Gone by are the pleasures, gone by the sorrows, gone by the labours, gone by the hopes, never again to return. One thing alone remains to us of the past :—the *profit* or the *loss* of what has gone by—the words, the works that have been swept away in the current. Words and works are gone, but the profit or loss remains, remains in the account book of the conscience, open to the eye of God.

Every householder who loves order, at the close of the year casts a glance over the past twelve months, to see what of gain, or what of loss has accrued to him. He acknowledges the gains with thankful heart, and by the losses he sees he directs his business more prudently for the future.

**Subject.**—New Year's Day is a day (1), For thanking God for benefits received, and (2), For repenting before God for wasted blessings.

1. Every good and every perfect work cometh down, as the Apostle teaches us (S. James i. 17) from above, from the Father of Lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Just as the sun rules over the changes of the seasons in the earth, and with his light and warmth quickens and ripens all creatures, so does God, exalted high in Heaven, reign over and rule the world and its changes. And it is through Him that we live and move and have our being.

We look to Him and thank Him for all the blessings received from Him (a) in the Natural, (b) Moral, and (c) Religious Order.

(a) In the Natural Order. Our health and strength, our ability to go about, and fulfil our work. The welfare of our families, the prosperity of our business. The food we have earned, the clothing we have put on, the house that covers our heads. All these we owe to Him.

(b) In the Moral Order. God has taken care for us, He has not left us without calls and warnings and instruction. His voice has spoken unto us, His Spirit has led us, His way has opened before us. He has sent us many a token of His favour or displeasure. He has pointed out to us the way in which we should walk. He has cast stumbling-blocks in the broad road, to hinder us from perishing in the course which leads to destruction.

(c) In the Religious Order. Has not God heard our prayers? Has He not shed abroad His grace in our hearts? Has He not given us strength to resist temptation? Has He not filled us with yearning after Heaven? Has He not given us compunction for sin? Have we not been able to approach Him in the Sacraments? Has not His table been spread before us, and we have been strengthened and refreshed thereat by the precious Body and Blood of our Lord? Has not the sacred season of the Christian Year been of benefit to us? Surely, for all we have received we must give thanks.

II. New Year's Day, again, is a day of repentance for misused blessings, and for neglected opportunities. It is a day of counting up our losses, and seeing how we may turn our knowledge and experience to good account so as not to lose again in the ensuing year.

(a) We must on this day give account for lost *time*. Our time is given us to improve, to advance on our heavenward course. Have we made any steps forward? Have we gained any victory? Have we acquired any grace? Alas! how few can say Yes. Then if not, we must repent our neglect, and strive to redeem the time in the future.

(b) We must on this day give account of lost *opportunities*. Life is made up of a number of opportunities of doing good, opportunities which if not seized at once slip away, and are never recovered again. Success in life is due to a readiness with firm hand to grasp an opportunity. Spiritual success is the same. There is no progress, no success for the timorous soul which will not lay hold when it may.

(c) We must on this day give account of lost *grace*. Remember this :—to all of us, at our Baptism grace was given to enable us to serve God and keep His commandments. It was the ammunition served out to us for the spiritual warfare. What have we done with our ammunition? Used it? Wasted it? Thrown it away? What can we shew that we have done with it? Then, my brethren, we must all of us lament lost grace, wasted

grace, as well as lost time and wasted opportunities. Let us ask God to teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom, and strive to redeem the time, because the days are evil.

---

VIII.

*EPIPHANY.*


---

S. MATT. II. II.

“ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him.”

**Introduction.**—It has been generally thought that the three Wise Men from the East who came to worship at the feet of the infant Jesus, were kings or princes. This belief has had its foundation in the prophecy that kings should come to the brightness of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, a prophecy which seems impossible to allow to have had fulfilment unless we accept this tradition. In pictorial representations of the Epiphany the three wise men are given crowns as insignia of their dignity.

Let us suppose that the prophecy did apply to these men, and that they were princes. Then how wonderful !



Here at the Nativity we see kings kneeling before the King of kings, the Prince of Peace ; and hereafter, when the work of the Incarnation is accomplished, the Sacrifice is made, and man's sins are atoned for, S. John sees a throne in Heaven, and a Lamb upon it, that same lamb-like Child now resting on His mother's knee, and before Him again bend kings, not three, but four and twenty, once wise men, now elders, but on both occasions with gold and incense. Once with gold and incense and myrrh : now, the work of redemption over, the myrrh is no more needed.

**Subject.**—We may learn, both from the kings at the Epiphany and the kings in Heaven, from the attitudes assumed before the Holy Child, and that before the Lamb as it had been slain, that Bodily Reverence is expected by Christ of His worshippers,—that worship without it is no worship at all.

1. S. Paul says that we must “render to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.” He would have all respect paid to the king, as supreme, and to governors, and all who are put in authority, even though these kings and governors be pagans, and those who shew them respect be Christians. Now if this be so, how infinitely higher respect and reverence is due from us to Him Who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, to Him by Whom kings reign.

We must never forget that Christ is human as well as divine, and that He expects at the least as much outward honour shown Him, His house, His altar-throne, His day, His word, His ministers, as are due to the house and throne, and commands, and officers of an earthly potentate.

When the 'Messiah' was first performed in England, King George II. was present, and when the choir and orchestra burst forth in that wondrous Hallelujah Chorus, the old king started up, and the whole assembly rose at once, following his action. The king felt that in such an ascription of praise to the King of kings, but one attitude was seemly, and he stood up; and ever since, whenever that chorus is sung, Englishmen rise in reverence, and in obedience to the example of the king.

When the National Anthem is played, every loyal Englishman removes his hat, as a tribute of honour to his sovereign. Our King of kings expects that the same instinct of respect shall actuate us in all that belongs to Him. When we enter His house, we uncover, when we approach His altar, we bow, when we address Him in supplication, we kneel.

It is a grief to me to see how many do not bow their knees in prayer to God. They will have to bow, and fall prostrate in Heaven, and so they may as well begin to show reverence on earth. How can men expect to be heard when they pray, if they do not address their King respectfully? How can they expect that He will graciously



listen to their prayers, if they shew no courtesy and no humility in asking? Would an earthly king give a very patient hearing to a request made to him by a lounging suppliant?

I will tell you a true story. There was an old clergyman who was much troubled because his wife would sit in Church, instead of kneeling. He spoke about it to her, but she gave no heed. No—she was more comfortable sitting, and she thought she could pray just as well in one position as in another. “You may pray as well,” he said, “but I doubt your being heard as well.” However it was no good, he might just as well have spoken to a stone wall. So then, one day he went to his wife’s old servant, and said to her, “Hannah, I will give you a crown if you will go to my wife, and sit down on the sofa at her side, and ask her to give you a holiday to-morrow, because you want to go home to your friends.” Hannah was shy, however the prospect of the crown encouraged her, and she opened the door timidly, went in, and walking up to the sofa, where her mistress was knitting, sat down at her side. The old lady looked up in great astonishment, and asked what in the world she wanted. “A holiday to-morrow, ma’am.” “Leave the room instantly, you impudent woman,” exclaimed the old lady, “and *if you want to have a request granted, learn to ask it in a proper manner.*”

Then the husband put his head in, and said, “My dear!

is not this preaching to Hannah the lesson I have been preaching to you for years? *If you want to have a request granted, learn to ask it in a proper manner.*

Next Sunday, and ever after, the old lady knelt in Church. She saw that it would not do to treat Jesus Christ in the way in which she did not like to be treated herself.

II. Now why does our Lord expect the homage of the body as well as the soul? For this reason: because He is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul. He came into the world and took our nature upon Him, not only to save our souls, but also to redeem our bodies from corruption.

At the resurrection we shall rise again in our bodies, never more to taste of death and to see decay. In these bodies we shall enter into life. In these bodies we shall worship Christ for all eternity. These bodies we shall never lay aside. Thus, you see, He is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul. He demands that the body He has saved, as well as the soul He has redeemed, shall give Him honour for the work He has accomplished. Therefore—to conclude in the words of the Apostle—let us glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's.

---

IX.

*THE LOSS OF CHRIST.*

**1st Sunday after Epiphany.**

---

S. LUKE II. 44.

"They sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance—and found Him not."

**Introduction.**—Some years ago an institution for the blind was erected in one of our large towns. The Committee put their wise heads together and decided that as the building was for the blind, for those who could not see—there was only waste of money and no reason in going to the expense of windows. Scientific ventilation and heating was provided, but no windows, because—as the Committee very logically put it—it was no use in the world providing light for those who cannot see it. Accordingly, the new Blind Asylum was inaugurated and opened, and the poor sightless patients settled into the house.

Things did not go well with them, however, they began to sicken, one after another, a great languor fell on them, they felt always distressed and restless, craving for something, they hardly knew what ; and after one or two had died and all were ill, the Committee sat on the matter, and resolved to open windows. Then the sun poured in, and the white faces recovered colour, and the flagging vital energies revived, the depressed spirits recovered, and health and rest returned.

**Subject.**—I think this is not unlike the condition of a vast number of people. Christ Jesus is the Sun of the soul, the Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. It is He Who gives health and rest to the heart, and fills the soul with that peace which passes man's understanding. But there are a good number who in their wisdom think that they can do without Him, they are the wise committee-men sitting on their own case, and building up walls to shut themselves in and shut Him out. They cannot see Jesus, the Light of the world, therefore they can live without Him.

Now I do not know whether you have noticed it, but I have, what an expression of peace there is on the faces of those whose walk is with God, as contrasted with the unrest that characterises the faces of those who live without God in the world. I do not mean bad people, but those who live chiefly for the world—in a windowless asylum of their own construction.

I. A great number who do not realize their unrest. They are so engrossed in their daily work, they are so full of hopes and schemes, that they can think of nothing else. They like the bustle and excitement of active life. Mary and Joseph, when they started on their way home, went a day's journey in unconsciousness of their loss. There were all the little items of the starting from Jerusalem to occupy them, the looking after their baggage, and their small purchases, and they were so full of these that they *were quite unconscious that Jesus was lost*. Like the blind men when first put into the windowless asylum, they did not at first miss the sun. And precisely so it is with many. They do not know that they are travelling along the road of life without Christ. They do not see that they are shut into a house without light. That is the first stage. They are not sick and uneasy, there is all the novelty of an active life, all its many interests opening before them. They are so reliant on their vigorous powers, their hearts are so sanguine that everything will go well with them, that they do not become aware of the necessity they are in of taking Jesus along with them. They do not see Him, but they do not want Him.

II. Then comes the second stage in life's journey. They become uneasy. They are aware that all is not quite right. They want something, they long for rest, and *they look for what they want in the wrong place*. Mary and Joseph went a day's journey, and then sought Jesus among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. Can you not

imagine the blind people in the Asylum, after the excitement of groping about their new home was over, feeling everything, and finding their way, becoming rather weary of the Asylum, and then restless. There was something wanting, but what they did not quite know. Yes—it was light and heat. To be sure it was—nothing more certain—light and heat. So some clustered together in a corner to keep each other warm, and others went to the hot water apparatus and put their hands on that, and others with great exultation found their way to the gas lights, and put their blank eyes and faces twitching with distress close to the flaring jets. No—this did not answer. They went to the wrong places and things, what they were craving for was not there. Well, is it not much so with a great number of nominal Christians? They have gone on awhile without Christ, and then are conscious of an unrest in their souls. There is a nervous craving for peace and light, but where to get it they do not know. So they hunt for it here and there, but always in the wrong places. Sometimes they seek distraction when they want rest; then they seek pleasure when they want peace. Then they give themselves up to tittle-tattle with their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and try to find happiness in society. But no—that will not do. Jesus Christ—the only anchoring-place of the soul, the only light that can illumine them, and bring back to them comfort and health—is not to be found in distraction, in pleasure, or in society.

III. The last stage is not taken by all, it is well for those who do take it. Mary and Joseph, we are told, when they found not Christ in the circle of their acquaintance, turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him, and *found Him in the Temple*. Well, I say, is it for those who having discovered the unrest of their souls, and that it is not to be banished by plunging into a whirl of pleasure, or by a round of dinner-parties, and dances, and morning calls, and afternoon teas, and gossip, and empty talk over trifles of the day, resolutely turn back, and seek Him Who is the rest of the soul, where He will be found—in His Temple. There He will be found seated among the doctors, that is, He in the verity of the faith as handed down and proclaimed by the teachers of His Church, He as believed in by Apostles and Martyrs, and proclaimed by Evangelists in all ages, in the One true Catholic doctrine of the Word made Flesh and dwelling among us, waits to welcome, comfort and rejoice the seeking soul. There, in His Temple, enthroned on His altar, made known in the breaking of bread, He waits to enter into, refresh, strengthen, and give perfect peace to the hungry soul, weary with the unsatisfying food of the world.

**Conclusion.**—Imagine the great joy of the blind men when the masons came and broke holes in the walls, and the glorious golden sun shot its rays into those dreary halls. How they sprang up in their beds! How their desponding faces lightened! How they stretched forth

eagerly their trembling arms to welcome the gladsome beams, and how their wan cheeks flushed with colour !

So, too, my brethren, is it with those who, after having for some time gone on in darkness, lived without the true light, feeling unrest and finding it unbanished by methods of their own devising, return and seek Christ in His temple in the true faith, and in Sacramental union. The great object of finding Christ is to find rest for the soul. He is not then to be sought in exciting religious meetings, and fanatical appeals for conversion, but in the still cool courts of the Temple, where there is no noise, no glare, but the scent of the daily sacrifice embalming the air, and seven lamps burning before the mercy-seat, the ever-dwelling sevenfold Spirit ready to illumine the dark heart, and Christ the Sacramental Bread from Heaven, ever present to satisfy the empty soul with good things.

---



X.

*THE WORDS OF MARY.*

*2nd Sunday after Trinity.*

---

S. JOHN II. 5.

"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

**Introduction.**—How very few words of the Blessed Virgin have been preserved ! Those few that have been so, we may be pretty sure are of importance, and they should be precious.

If we consider, we find that she spoke when the Angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that she was to be the Mother of incarnate God ; " Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word." Beautiful words, containing in them the lesson of perfect submission to the will of God. How could the attitude of the perfect soul be represented better and more

beautifully in its relation to God? When He deigns to show it great favour, to overshadow it with the Holy Ghost, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word." When He comes with chastisement, with sorrow, with the warning, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also," in perfect reliance that God will not deal more hardly than nature can bear, and grace can support, the soul answers in sweet resignation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word."

The second time that Mary spoke—and that her words are recorded—was in the Hill Country, when, in answer to the salutation of Elizabeth, she said the Magnificat. Into the beauty and teaching of that glorious canticle I cannot enter now. The Church has shown her appreciation of it by making it her song for every evening in the year.

The third time that Mary spoke was at Cana of Galilee, at the marriage-feast, and now mark the importance of her words to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

**Subject.**—Just as in Mary's words at the Annunciation we have, crushed into the smallest shape, the perfect expression of Christian compliance with the will of God, so have we in her words at Cana, the whole of Christian practice condensed into one brief maxim. The inner life cannot go astray if it ever stands in the position to God

indicated by her words at the Annunciation. The Christian outer life must be perfect if it be regulated by her command at the marriage-feast. So Mary speaks, not to the servants of Cana only, but to the whole Church, to every servant of God, when, pointing to Christ, she says, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

1. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word." You know, perhaps, that of duties there are two kinds; there are those that are active, and there are those that are passive. *In the first saying of Mary we have the inculcation of the passive virtues.*

What are they?

It is much more difficult to endure than to do. The passive virtues are more difficult of acquisition than those that are active, and so Mary puts them first. If we have acquired them, the others are easy enough. But it is not always possible to acquire them early in life, they come later, and generally after the active virtues have been exercised.

The passive virtues are—resignation, patience, gentleness, faith, and the like. When S. Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, it is remarkable that he gives a list of passive virtues only. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All quiet and undemonstrative virtues, all inward and spiritual, but all involving a great deal of crucifixion of the flesh into its affections and lusts.

When our Lord spoke the Beatitudes on the Mount, He blessed the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those hungering after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The richest blessings are poured on these, the gift of the kingdom, comfort, the inheritance of the earth, satisfaction, mercy, the vision of God. Now, all these virtues are either wholly or chiefly inward and passive. They make no stir in the world, they impress themselves on the notice very little. The poor in spirit are hidden from all but God, the meek bear everything without a murmur, the pure in heart have their purity most concealed, the hunger after righteousness is all within, the persecuted do nothing but bear, only the peace-makers steal into outer action to soothe angry spirits, and hush the strife of tongues.

Now all this perfection, this beautiful inner life, redolent with sweet flowers of perfection, is like a fountain enclosed, a walled garden, not seen and known of all. And it all springs from a perfect resignation and conformity to the will of God. That soul which can like Mary cry, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word," submits itself to God to be prepared by His chosen means, sometimes very painful, but always salutary, to be perfected in the hidden virtues.

II. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." In these words of Mary *we have the rule for the perfect acquisition of the active virtues.*

Now, excellent as the passive virtues are, they cannot stand alone. The kingdom of Heaven has to be advanced in the earth, and man is given a good deal of energy and readiness to work. Therefore, it is only reasonable, and what we might expect, that God should encourage him to spend his energy in the service of God, and work for Him in His vineyard.

Indeed, there are parables of our Lord which shew that He is not content without energetic work. The inner life of passive goodness is blessed, but blessed also and richly rewarded is also the outer life of active benevolence.

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory,—and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.—Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Pray observe, the same reward—the kingdom of Heaven—is given to these active workers, as to the poor

in spirit, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake, those admirable for their passive virtues.

In the parable of the labourers standing idle in the marketplace, and in that of the talents, our Lord urges the necessity of active work, and shows that a great reward is given to the energetic labourers, to those who make use of the talents committed to their custody.

**Conclusion.**—Let us then keep these sayings of Mary, and ponder them in our heart, let us make them the maxims of our inner and of our outer lives, let us strive to conform our wills so wholly to that of God, that we may be always ready to say, “Be it unto me according to Thy word,” but also, with the Gospel open before us, seeing the will of God, hearing His commandments, let us also say, “Whatsoever He saith unto us—we will do it.”

---

## XI.

### *GOD'S WONDER.*

**3rd Sunday after Epiphany.**

---

S. MATT. VIII. 10.

"Jesus—marvelled."

**Introduction.**—In to-day's Gospel we have the story of the Centurion who came to Christ as He entered Capernaum, and who entreated Him to have mercy on his servant, sick with the palsy, and to heal him. Our Lord at once promised to go to the home of the Centurion, and heal the servant. But the soldier said, "I am not worthy of this honour, that Thou shouldest come under my roof. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Then, we are told, when Jesus heard this, "He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

**Subject.**—The wonder of our Blessed Lord was not directed so much at the Centurion having faith, as at the isolation of his case. He marvelled that after His having performed so many miracles of healing, there was not to be found in all Israel one with a faith as simple and frank as that of the soldier, and that so far, He had met with only this single instance among the Gentiles. There was another case, later, the case of the Syro-Phœnician woman, whose faith was equal to that of the Centurion. And if our Lord had cause to marvel then at the general want of faith, He has occasion to marvel still.

1. An ancient philosopher said in heathen times, "When you come on a hut in a wood, you say, 'Someone built this?' Can you look on the great mansion of earth, with its pavilion of sky, and not exclaim, 'Someone must have made this!' Yes—God." *Jesus must marvel at man's unbelief.*

How strange it is nowadays to find such desire to account for the existence of the world in any way except as the creation of God. The universe has gradually developed by inarticulate and inanimate gropings into its present condition, out of some nebulous matter, which came into existence no one knows how, except that it was not created. There is no directing Providence, but a blind battle of forces, and the survival of the strongest and fittest.

I think that it must be a subject of marvel to God that

---



with such evidence of a creative power and of Providence watching over creation, men should doubt and disbelieve in Him. Look at the tiny hand of a newborn babe, small,—you seem to be looking at a microscopic hand,—and yet it is perfect in all its parts, the diminutive bones, the little joints, the thread-like veins, the little nails, the platted nervous coat—all there, so small and so complete. The work of a blind nature!—of no guiding, watching, loving power!—Verily, it is harder not to believe in God than to look up to Him with heart full of faith. It requires an effort to disbelieve, faith is a natural growth, that must be pulled up and destroyed.

II. It must be also an occasion of *marvel to Jesus that there is so much wrong belief*. The Jews had the books of Moses pointing to Christ, and the voices of the prophets speaking of Him, but they would not believe in Him, though they believed in God Who sent Him. “Search the Scriptures,” said our Lord to them, “for they are they which testify of Me. But ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.” It did indeed seem marvellous that the Jews should fulfil the very Scriptures which they had before their eyes, and which were read in their ears every Sabbath-day. But blindness had fallen upon them, and they did not see the inconsistency of their conduct.

So also must Jesus marvel now at so many who profess and call themselves Christians, believing in Him, reverencing His word, professing to rule their lives by it, and

yet keeping aloof from the Church which He founded, that Catholic Church which is built up on Him, the chief corner-stone, and on the Apostles and Prophets. They surely know that He communicated His authority to His Church, and gave it a Divine Mission, when He breathed on His Apostles, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." They read His promise to the Church, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, they know His words, "He that will neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,"—and yet, they will join sects and communions of man's invention, and of quite modern creation, and keep separate from the Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.

III. Jesus must also *marvel at the inconsistency of true believers*. S. Paul was obliged even in the early days of the Church to urge the primitive Christians to be zealous in walking worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, to be followers of God, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Surely Christ must marvel when He observes the lives of His baptized members, indifferent to their privileges, forgetful of the end to which they are called, neglectful of the duties imposed on them, cold in their faith, with little hope, and lukewarm charity.

If they believe, let them shew their faith by their works. If they have hopes of Heaven, let them live for Heaven, if they love God, let them shew it by their love to others.

If they have the seed of the spiritual life sown in their hearts, why do they not cultivate it? If they have the grace of God offered them, to enable them to grow in likeness to Christ, why do they not ask for it? If they profess themselves soldiers of Christ, why do they not fight His battles?

No—they are lukewarm. What says Christ of such? When S. John saw Him holding the seven stars in His hand, and received His message to the Churches, this He spake to the Bishop of Laodicæa: "I know thy works, neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

The expression is strong, it could not more forcibly express the utter loathing with which Christ beholds half-hearted Christians, who placidly admit everything, and do nothing, suffer nothing, are stimulated to nothing.

**Conclusion.**—When we consider the heathen, cut off from the light of revelation, we may well marvel that there are so many virtues in them, that there is so much sobriety, goodness of heart, love of truth, and sense of honour.

When we consider those Christians who are separate

from the Church we may well marvel that, cut off from the life-giving Sacraments, there is in them so much spirituality, such an earnest piety, such love of God.

But mostly must we marvel—with Christ—at those who, knowing the way of God, within the fold of the Church, well instructed, with the Sacraments accessible for the strengthening and refreshing of their souls, show no signs of spiritual life, no earnestness in their profession, no zeal for the glory of God.

---

## XII.

### *CONFIDENCE.*

*4th Sunday after Epiphany.*

---

S. MATTHEW VIII. 26.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

**Introduction.**—There is a little town called Feldkirch, on the frontier of Austria, on the Ill, an affluent of the Rhine. It numbers something under three thousand inhabitants. In the year 1799, when the armies of Napoleon were sweeping over the Continent, Massena, one of his generals, suddenly appeared on the heights above the town, at the head of 18,000 men. It was Easter Day, and the morning sun as it rose glittered on the weapons of the French, at the top of the range of hills to the west of Feldkirch. The town council hastily assembled to consult what was to be done. Defence was

impossible. Should a deputation be sent to Massena with the keys of the town, and an entreaty that he treat the place with mercy? Then the old Dean of the Church stood up. "It is Easter Day," he said, "We have been reckoning our own strength, and that fails. It is the day of the Lord's Resurrection. Let us ring the bells, and have service as usual, and leave the matter in God's hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God." His words prevailed. Then, all at once, from the three or four Church towers in Feldkirch the bells began to clang joyous peals in honour of the Resurrection, and the streets filled with worshippers hastening to the House of God. The French heard with surprise and alarm the sudden clamour of joy-bells; and concluding that the Austrian army had arrived in the night to relieve the place, Massena suddenly broke up his camp, and before the bells had ceased ringing, not a Frenchman was to be seen.

**Subject.**—We are too little disposed to trust in God, and too much disposed to fall into despair when our own powers fail.

1. There are three accounts of the miracle of the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, that in S. Matthew's Gospel, that which adds little, given in S. Luke's Gospel, and that given by S. Mark. Of these two accounts S. Mark's is the most full. He mentions the fact that Christ was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow, and

that the disciples had to wake Him, with the somewhat petulant reproach, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" S. Mark gives us a few additional particulars. The disciples took our Blessed Lord into the ship "even as He was," and we learn from the same Evangelist that there followed "also with Him other little ships." Our Lord had been preaching by the seaside, addressing a great multitude of people, so great, indeed, was the crowd that He was obliged to enter a ship, and speak from that. This S. Mark tells us, and S. Matthew adds that when even was come the people brought Him many that were possessed with devils, and many sick, and He healed them. When, therefore, S. Mark tells us that the disciples received Him "even as He was" into the ship, it probably means, thoroughly worn out by His hard day's work. That He should retire to the back of the ship, lay His head on a pillow, and fall asleep, is consequently not to be wondered at.

Then the storm broke, and "the waves beat into the ship," and it "was covered with the waves." "It was now full." There are, certainly, times when we are sore distressed, and troubles innumerable overwhelm us, when, as there, waves beat into our ship, when our heads go under water, and we seem to be as full of the bitter waters of affliction as we can hold, when, indeed, there appears no prospect but sinking. And all this while we have had no help from above, there has been no sign that God was with us; Providence, so far as we were personally con-

cerned, has been quite in the back-ground, and fast asleep. There are, I say, times when these storms break over us, and try us to the uttermost, external storms, when the distress comes from pecuniary losses ; or domestic storms, when distress comes from sundry family disappointments or losses ; or spiritual storms, when distress comes from the overwhelming waves of temptation, or the desolation caused by disturbance of our faith.

And through all, we have had to battle with our own hands and our best energies, without finding help from above, any light to guide us, any hope shine down to encourage us. Jesus Christ is in the back of the ship, asleep on a pillow.

11. But then is the time to throw everything at the feet of Christ. Let us by all means do everything we possibly can, by our own energy, and prudence, and care. Use all the skill at our disposal to weather the storm and keep the water out of the boat ; but when we find that we can do no more, then—instead of despairing, I say, call on Christ to awake, and put the whole matter in His hands, for He careth for you.

The petulant temper of the disciples was a very natural one, but not a right one. They were worn out with bailing and rowing. They were thoroughly knocked up, and like most tired people, out of temper, and when they found that Christ was asleep, in a very unbecoming manner they roused Him up.



The right temper to adopt is different, it is entire resignation. In such a case resolve that whatever the will of God is, you are ready to abide by it. Still—you trust that He will not desert you. It is a case of sinking to the bottom, or getting on to the land, and you cannot believe that except for a very extraordinary trial of faith, God will subject you to that ; however, if He wills it, be ready to go.

Resignation, I say, is a right temper, but there is a better temper even than resignation, and that is confidence. It is said of the English soldier that he never knows when he is beaten, and something of the same sort should characterise the Christian. Let him never despair. When things are at their worst, let him trust that matters will mend. Let him, when he has done all that lies in his own power, put it in God's hands, with such confidence in God that he will not believe God will desert him.

S. James says of prayer, that to be efficacious it should be asked “nothing doubting,” and this is precisely the confidence which I am speaking about.

This confident prayer gets answered, and answered in a very surprising way, much more often than is supposed. I daresay some of you have read the discussions that have been going on in Reviews concerning “Prayer.” Some of our scientific men dispute its efficacy altogether, and argue that prayer, except for spiritual graces, is audacious, as it supposes that God will interfere with the general

order or march of affairs at the request of one or two. There may be some sense in what they say, and there are, of course, things that we cannot expect God to alter on our account ; still, that prayer is efficacious in matters not merely spiritual, is so completely a thing of Christian experience, that those of you who in trouble have gone boldly to the throne of grace, who have asked "nothing doubting," and have got what you wanted, must have been amused rather than otherwise by these scientific disputants on the efficacy of prayer.

**Conclusion.**— Finally then, away with all despair when in sore distress. Christ may seem to sleep, but He is present ; earnest prayer, when every human means has failed, will awake Him, and he will deliver you out of your trouble.

---

### XIII.

#### *MODERATION.*

5th Sunday after Epiphany.

---

S. MATT. XIII. 28.

"Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?"

**Introduction.**—In the parable given us in this day's Gospel we have a picture of the Church and of the world, both with good therein mixed with the bad. And the lesson given us by the parable is moderation in dealing with the evil.

The world is full of evil men, who set at naught the law of God : men who are the cause of a vast amount of evil and misery, who by example and precept are a constant corrupting element in the world, breeding moral disease. Can you not imagine the blessed Angels, who watch over the heirs of salvation, who rejoice over every

sinner who repents, going in very wrath to their God, and crying to Him, "Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?" If we put in fancy a consciousness into the elements made by God, can we not imagine the sea crying to God, when some foul livers and blasphemers are sailing on its waters, "Wilt Thou that we waters swell and swallow them up?" Or the fire, glowing with indignation at debauch and riot, in some house that has become a haunt of devils, exclaiming to its Lord, and saying, "See these vile profligates, poisoning and ruining all they touch, wilt Thou that we go forth with our red tongues, and gather them up?" Or the earth—can you not imagine it—that earth, once the abode of all that God pronounced good—groaning now, and travailing in pain, because of the evil that is done upon it, sighing forth its complaint to its Creator against those who tread it and fill it with violence, "Wilt Thou that I open and gather them up, as Korah and his company?"

**Subject.**—But no ! God suffers long and forbears. In all good there must be evil ; and if we seek to destroy because of the evil, we shall do more harm than good.

I. It has been the great misfortune in most of the attempts made at reformation in the Church, that the reformers did not bear this in mind, and with ruthless hand they destroyed, instead of patiently waiting the weeding hand of God. We, in the Church of England, have by a special Providence preserved to us almost

everything that was most precious, but still we have lost something which now we feel the want of. Elsewhere the case has been different. In Scotland, in Germany, in Switzerland, the Reformers were veritable destroyers, they went with furious and inconsiderate zeal into the Lord's cornfield, and tore up everything that came in their way, till it resembled a bristly, trampled stubble-field, which had been run over by wild animals. Nearly everything worth having, as well as some of the weeds, but by no means all, were torn up or trampled under foot, and what remains is so nasty and insufficient as to be not worth reaping.

It is well to bear this in mind when we ourselves find things in the Church not quite as we should wish, when we find weeds as well as corn. Let us possess our souls in patience, and not be too impetuous to reform.

We find, may be, in our parish, in our parish church, everything not up to our ideal, not everything as perfect as we think it should be ; and we become impatient for a restoration and improvement. Do not be too eager to be at the weeds, too headlong for alteration, the greatest care, prudence, and moderation must be exercised, or we are very likely to do more harm than good.

II. In the ordinary course of life it is necessary for us to have relaxation. This age is one of very hard work, and very straining work, to brain and nerve. In a past generation it was not so. Our forefathers took matters

much more easily than we do. They worked as much as they thought necessary, and relaxed themselves a good deal after it. But we live at such a railroad speed, and business requires such close and incessant attention, that relaxation becomes not merely a necessity, but a positive duty. A man in business is bound to take a certain amount of holiday and pleasure, because he is bound not to over-tax the physical and mental organism God has given him. Now there are various amusements: the theatre, operas, social gatherings, dances, novel-reading, &c., which are bitterly denounced by certain good people as wicked, to be utterly done away with, as unfit for Christian people to partake in. There they are in error. They act like the impetuous servants of the parable, they go and gather up into bundles and burn all these amusements, because there is much that is objectionable to be met with in them. Of course there is. It is the same with teetotalism. If some zealots could have their way, they would tear up every vine and hop plant in the world, and bind them in bundles and burn them, because such a thing exists as drunkenness. The lesson of the parable is moderation in the use of everything, forbearance in dealing with everything. There are weeds everywhere, in every cornfield, but there is more corn than weeds. A good lady said to me the other day, "I find if one wants to escape infectious diseases the only way is to get out of the world." Now the conduct of those who denounce all amusements, because there are elements of evil in

them, is that of the burghers of a German town who burned it down to destroy the rats in the houses.

III. S. Paul tells us what Christ came into the world<sup>\*</sup> to teach men—three things, just three things—“to live soberly, righteously, and godly.” “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,—teaching us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” that is to say, soberly as to ourselves, righteously and justly towards others, godly, *i.e.* piously, towards God.

Soberly—as to ourselves, that is, using the world and not abusing it, taking our pleasures moderately, enjoying life within reasonable limits, eating and drinking temperately, not flying from art, whether in the picture-gallery, or the concert-room, or in the theatre, but trying to appreciate its beauties, and setting our faces against all that is debasing and ignoble in it; entering into society, and into gatherings of our neighbours, but not devoting ourselves wholly to dancing and gaities. That is sobriety. Sole seclusion from such things is not sobriety at all, and therefore not one of those things the Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to teach. The Grace of God hath appeared to lead to salvation, and salvation will be won rather by Moderation than by Total Abstinence.

---

#### XIV.

### *A WILL TO BE SAVED.*

6th Sunday after Epiphany.

---

S. MATTHEW XIII., 31.

“ The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed.”

**Introduction.**—Several reasons have been given for our Lord likening the kingdom to a grain of mustard-seed, for his choosing that seed in particular. S. Cæsarius of Arles said he thought the similitude very appropriate, for the mustard-seed is so small that it easily slips through the fingers, and nothing, he thought, is more easily let escape and allowed to be lost than the Kingdom of Heaven. S. Vincent of Beauvais’ opinion is more comfortable and nearer the truth. He says—Christ took the mustard-seed as the symbol of His Kingdom, because it is one of the most robust of herbs and indestructible of seeds. Throw



it where you will, in any sort of soil—it is least capricious of all plants, it will spring up. The mustard-seed has only to be sown, and it grows. So the Kingdom of Heaven is the simplest, the easiest of things to be gained. Only one thing is wanted, the will to gain it.

**Subject.**—If any man desires to be saved, he has the means in his own hands, let him *will* to be saved. If any man desires to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, let him *will* to enter it.

Remember this : God has given to every man a free will. He would have all men to be saved, He willeth not the death of a sinner ; but as He has given man a free will, He cannot force him to be saved, and drive him into Heaven without his free consent.

1.—A contract is entered into by God with man. God says to him : “I will thy salvation. I throw open the Kingdom of Heaven to every man who will enter therein.” But then, on man’s side there must be a consent. God says, “Thou also must desire my salvation. Thou also must approach the Heavenly gate.”

We are told in the Acts that Our Blessed Lord, when on earth, went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with ills. Now let us look back at the Gospels and see His manner of proceeding. When He came to Bethesda and saw there a man who had suffered from an infirmity thirty-and-eight years, He addressed him in these

remarkable words: "*Will* thou be made whole?" The Lord was ready with the healing virtue, but without a readiness of will to receive it, the virtue would not flow out. A blind man sat by the wayside begging, and when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, he cried out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought unto Him, and asked him, "What *will* thou that I shall do unto thee?" And when he showed that he had a will to be healed, Jesus gave him his sight. Thus, in almost all of the miracles He exacted an exhibition of a will to accept before He granted the restoration.

So does He act with us in our spiritual maladies, we must show an eager and earnest will to be healed before He can heal us. We must show an eager and earnest desire to receive grace before He will confer it. We must show an eager and earnest will to enter Heaven, or we will never enter the narrow way that leads to it.

The sister of one of the profoundest of Theologians and teachers of the Church (S. Thomas Aquinas) once said to him, "O my brother, I am troubled with doubts and difficulties, I am full of frailty, and feebleness, and am girt about with temptations. What shall I do to be saved?"

"Will it!" was all his answer—very short, but it contained the kernel of everything. Unless there be a good, lusty, determined will to be saved, then you will be blown about with doubts, hindered by difficulties, give way

through frailty, make no progress through feebleness, break down under temptation.

II.—There was once a poor fellow who was terribly beset with melancholy, and a temptation to destroy himself. He thought he heard a voice night and day saying to him, "Get a rope and hang yourself." He was aware that this was a temptation and he was in sore fear lest it should overmaster him; so he went to a priest and asked his advice. The man of God exhorted him to earnest prayer, and fasting; but he got no good at all from these religious exercises, as far as he could see. Still he heard the horrible voice muttering in his ear, "Get a rope, get a rope—and hang yourself." In deeper depression than ever, he walked in his garden. Now, he had an old gardener, who had been in the family all his life; and seeing his master very low-spirited, he ventured to ask him what was the matter. "Jonathan, I don't mind telling you," said the master; "I am tormented night and day with a voice in my ear saying, 'Get a rope and hang yourself. And I can find no cure.'" "Well, Master," answered the old man, "I can give you one that is infallible. Whenever you hear the voice say 'Get a rope and hang yourself' answer stoutly, 'No, I won't.'"

Now for the application. I say to you, Whenever you meet with a temptation, whenever World, or Flesh, or Devil breathes into your ear advice to do that which is wrong, answer bluntly, "No, I won't," and if

I am not greatly mistaken, the force of temptation will at once be broken. If ever you are allured to evil, then say "No, I won't," and the allurements loses its power. A good stubborn will is a rock which you may build your house upon, but the feeble, uncertain, shifting purpose is the sand on which if you attempt to construct the edifice of a Christian life, the walls will speedily show cracks, and with the first violent storm down it will go.

**Conclusion.**—I have spoken of the essential need of a good will to be saved, but I must not let you suppose that the will is everything. No, no! the ready will must be there, but the grace of God must be also there. The sick and blind might have willed to be healed, and to get their sight all their lives long, but had not Christ with His grace been present, they would not have been restored. So with us. We must *will* first, and then seek God's grace to perfect.

---

XV.

*I D L E R S .*

*Septuagesima.*

---

S. MATTHEW XX., 6.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

**Introduction.**—In the South of Tyrol there is a region of mountains running up to great heights, ten to twelve thousand feet, which rise in sheer precipices, and whose heads are needle-like in their sharpness, or like saws, so that the snow cannot rest upon them as on the Swiss Alps, but falls to their feet. Geologists tell us that these mountains are of Dolomitic limestone, and that this is their history. Far back in a remote age all that mountain region was the bottom of a shallow sea, and submarine volcanos had raised in the sea shoals of ash. It was a warm sea, and the coral insects began to build on these

shoals, and by degrees raised on them reefs of white coral till they came near to the surface. As they built, the bottom of the sea sank, so the tiny insects built on, diligently carrying up their walls higher, through countless ages, till at last the reef stood some eight or nine thousand feet high on top of the volcanic ash heaps. Then came a change. The fires in the heart of the globe resumed their activity, and the whole of this sea-bed was thrust high into the air, and now you can see the mighty mountains, snow-wreathed, standing up against the clear blue sky, like the fronts of giant organs, or like broken fragments of mighty saws. On a stormy day, you can see the sun kindling their peaks, and the clouds rolling along their sides heavy with rain and flashing with lightning, discharging their waters and their fires into the valleys below. Now I think it is impossible to look on these mountains, and knowing their history, not wonder that such mighty results should have been achieved by little insects hardly larger than your nail.

**Subject.**—The building up of Human Welfare and the progress of mankind to perfection is like the building of these mountains, the work of small individuals, often utterly insignificant, yet all necessary.

1. The advance of civilization has been slow but sure. Our present state of comfort and culture is the product of the experiences and efforts of many generations struggling upwards, to acquire what they felt was needed, and to

conquer what they felt was defective. Look back at man in his savage state, and look at the modern European, and see what a vast advance has been made, what victories have been won over the adverse forces of nature, how much of comfort has been acquired, and distributed among the many. Imagine the state of those in our island who lived on the produce of the chase, cowering in caves, shivering with cold, racked with rheumatic pains and agues. They hunted with rude stone arrows, and devoured their prey raw. Then there came an innovation—man found that by rubbing dry sticks together he could produce fire. After that, meat was cooked, and in winter the poor wretches could thaw their blue fingers at the red flames. Another innovation arose. Perhaps it was through a woman. Whilst her husband was hunting she put together sticks and threw over them skins, and found that in this rude tent she and her babes were better housed, dryer and warmer than in dripping caves. That was the first rude idea from which all houses and palaces and churches have sprung. Then game became scarce, and instead of eating only meat, some bold innovator attempted to satisfy his craving on the grains of wild marram. He strewed the seeds in the ground by his hut, and it sprung up, and he reaped a harvest. Other inventors crushed the grain between stones, and rubbed it to dust, and mixed it with water, and made dough, and baked it, and it was bread. Was this all the invention of one? I doubt it: the passage of grain through flour

to bread was probably a long one, counting centuries, and due to many initiators of new methods. And so on from little beginnings up to our present civilization. There is nothing you touch, which you use: food, linen, cloth, house, furniture, books, which is not the produce of ages of experience and effort after something better than was attainable in the present.

Thus you see how the coral mountain of social improvement is growing daily, built up by the labours and discoveries of individuals.

11. Now we see what is the law of human life—work upwards. That is what we are all called to, we, like coral worms, insignificant and mean, have all our vocation, to build it may be a half inch of the white reef upwards towards the light. How wondrously those little creatures built, gluing their tiny morsels of gathered lime together in microscopic films, applied one on the top of the other, but all going on from day to day, and always *upwards*, always *sunwards*; then when they died others took up their work, and went on surely in the same direction. So must we work diligently, and always upwards, never with our faces towards the dark bottom, never with our eyes away from the sun.

We all in our little way can do something for mankind, something to alleviate the great mass of human misery which still exists, something to increase the sum of human happiness which is still growing. That is distinctly the



work God has sent us into the world to do. We must build up upon the foundations already laid. This spring, as I have been writing or reading I have looked across the street, and noticed at a window two poor girls, sisters, who are always to be seen there, from morning early till late at night, making, mending, contriving for their crowd of little brothers and sisters—turning old gowns, patching broken-through elbows, cutting down long frocks into little ones, knitting stockings, trimming anew old straw hats with turned ribbands, that the little ones at small cost out of scant means may look respectable. And I think these are two coral-insects, building their little bit of reef, compacting it to the entire mass, to be raised higher by those that follow. Their work is not lost: it will be made manifest in that day when the fire shall try every man's work what it has been, and all is heaved into the light and air, a wonder to angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

III. And now, lastly:—It is very clear that there is no place in God's great coral reef for the mere idlers. God calls all his insects to build. The idler is an apostate from his calling, a renegade from his duty. I do not care what a man's means may be, whether he have a large fortune or be poor, the same law lies on all—Work, and work upwards.

---

## XVI.

### *THE GROWTH OF THE SEED.*

*Seragésima.*

---

S. LUKE VIII. II.

"The seed is the word of God."

**Introduction.**—Last Sunday the Gospel set before us a careful householder, this Sunday a diligent farmer. Last Sunday we were in a vineyard, this Sunday in a ploughed field. Last Sunday we were looking for a grape-gathering, this Sunday for a corn-harvest. Last Sunday the householder sent labourers into his vineyard, this Sunday he goes himself into his field. Last Sunday he sent labourers at diverse times of the day, this Sunday he sows on various sorts of soil. Then some went in "early in the morning," others "about the third hour," others "about the sixth and ninth hour," and others again

"about the eleventh hour." To-day some seed falls "by the way-side," some "on a rock," some "among thorns," and some "on good ground."

The Gospel for to-day wants little or no further interpretation than that given by our Lord Himself. It cannot be misunderstood. The seed is the word of God ; those by the way-side are they that hear, and lose what they have heard before it roots itself. Those on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but through shallowness of soil produce no fruit. And the seed that fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and owing to the entanglement of their business, bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

**Subject.**—Mark that last word, "with patience." How often is this parable of the Sower quoted and commented on, and how often does that last little word, that little last seed of instruction, drop through the fingers unnoticed—"with patience."

1. There is a verse in the 127th Psalm which is not often understood. The Psalmist begins, "Except the Lord build the house : their labour is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city : the watchman waketh but in vain." He means that there are two things must unite for security and prosperity, man's work, and God's blessing on that work, man's watchfulness, and

God's protection. Then he goes on, "It is but lost labour that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness: for so giveth He His beloved sleep." This passage I think has been misapprehended, for I have seen the last portion of it not infrequently on tombstones, and even taken as a text for funeral sermons; so I suppose it is read as though the Psalmist laid down the maxim that sleep, the sleep of death, is the gift of God to His beloved, when weary with their work and sparing.

But this misapprehension arises entirely from the dropping out of one little word, "whilst," from the translation. Now let us put it in, and see if the sense does not come. "It is but lost labour, you busy worldlings, that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness: for so giveth He His beloved whilst asleep"—that is, He gives increase to their goods to His beloved whilst they are asleep, and have left their affairs quietly for a time in the hands of God, instead of eternally fidgetting and consuming themselves with anxiety about them. Do you see the sense now? As the builder of the house must have God's blessing on his work if the house is to have peace to abide in it, as the watchers of the city must have God's eye waking to protect it, if it is to be kept secure, so in all business concerns man must have God's benediction, or in spite of all his fussing about them they will not get on. Those of His servants who are less cared for will thrive better, He gives increase even whilst they sleep. Here, then, is one lesson

we may take to heart : not to be over-careful, over-anxious about our worldly prosperity. It is these anxieties which grow up as the thorns, and vex and tear our souls, filling them full of wounds, hindering the growth of the divine seed, preventing the bringing forth of fruit to perfection, and very probably not even gaining the end aimed at, for if we have sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things would have been added to us, He would have given us, His beloved, quite as much, whilst we were asleep.

II. But there is a further lesson I wish to teach you. The good seed brings forth good fruit "with patience." That is to say, the good seed, if it is to bring forth fruit worth anything, must grow slowly, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. It is the seed on the rock which springs up rapidly, and then as rapidly withers away. "Slow and sure" is a maxim quite as applicable to spiritual growth as to progress in worldly matters. We are often very impatient with the seed, and want it to make more conspicuous progress. This is what your "converted" people expect. They think that the seed must shoot to the light in a night, and bear fruit in a day. It is only Jonah's gourds which do that, and a very small worm levels them with the earth in a third night. Toadstools and mushrooms spring up in a night, but it is only a few of these fungi which are edible, and none of them are as sweet and beautiful as the slow-growing, gradually unfolding flowers.

You have seen children who are given gardens, how after having planted their seeds, they become impatient to know how they are getting on, and dig them up every few days to note progress, and then are disappointed that the plant either dies or proves unhealthy. We act like children when we are continually poking about and digging up the seed of the Word of God in our own hearts, when we refuse to let it rest, and let it quietly grow, when we are as fussy and exacting with our spiritual concerns as with our worldly affairs, rising up early, and late taking rest, and eating our bread with carefulness. Quite as much increase is given, and an altogether better show of fruit, whilst the beloved sleep. There should be patience and restfulness in the Christian life ; there is quietude and confidence in the Christian soul, where there is real and healthy progress. God sows the seed and gives the increase. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will bring it to pass, do your duty gently, faithfully, and trustfully, and the seed will grow, no man knoweth how, but surely and vigorously, "first the blade, then the ear, afterward the full corn in the ear."

---

XVII.

*SEEING THE LANDMARKS.*

*Quinquagesima.*

---

S. LUKE XVIII. 41.

"What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight."

**Introduction.**—If I go, according to the Gospel to-day, towards Jericho, or indeed anywhere in the world, I light on blind men. But I notice this distinction between most and Bartimæus: near Jericho the blind man sat by the wayside, elsewhere I see the blind men running about. By Jericho, the blind man has his eyes shut, all others I notice have theirs wide open, staring. By Jericho, the blind man laments his darkness, and entreats illumination, elsewhere the blind men rejoice and are proud of the obscurity of their eyes. Curiously enough,

though most blind men walk very gingerly, fearful of falling into ditches or striking against walls, these whom I observe go headlong about, and take their tumbles and bruises in good part, and rather like them. The reason is that they are perfectly unconscious of their condition, they say they see, therefore their blindness remains.

All men, like puppies, are born blind ; and a good number of them, also like puppies, go out of the world without ever having their eyes opened. I do not mean that they do not see the sun, and the trees, and the faces of their fellow men ; I am speaking of other eyes than those set in the head. I am speaking of the inner eyes, those of the soul. You must remember that man is double in nature, he is composed of body and spirit ; as to the bodily eyes, there is no question at all about them, they see. But as to the spiritual eyes, it is not at all so certain that they are open. The bodily eyes are given a man that he may see those things that are necessary for his bodily welfare, and the spiritual eyes are given a man that he may see those things that are necessary for his spiritual welfare ; with the bodily eyes he sees sharply enough about him to keep himself from tumbling into ditches and knocking his head against stone walls, but the spiritual eyes are by no means so wide open. Indeed, some never have them unclosed at all,—and these are they whom I tell you I see on all sides of me, running about and getting falls and hurts, and taking these as



matters of course, and loudly resenting the imputation of blindness.

This is the blindness of which Christ speaks, "The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? And Jésus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin, but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth."

**Subject.**—It is not God's will that we should continue in blindness, therefore He sent His Son into the world to open the eyes of the blind, and give them light. What then is the light given us for? To see our way, our spiritual path. The light is spiritual, the eyes are spiritual.

1. The light is given to show us the landmarks of moral right and wrong. The old world was very dark. The human conscience had its glimmers of light, but saw very indistinctly. Many things which we know to be wrong were then esteemed right. Many things that we esteem as virtues were then held to be disgraceful. Revenge

was a sacred duty, and a heathen felt his conscience sting him, and he had no rest in his mind, till he had washed out in the blood of his enemy an injury done him. Among the Canaanites purity was dishonourable, and horrible uncleanness was approved by the gods. On the other hand humility, which we know to be the foundation-stone of a beautiful life, was then looked upon as infamous.

Now, there can be no mistake about right and wrong. The landmarks have been set up, ten great stones, the commandments ; with the boundaries marked in plain characters on them ; just like the stones that mark the limits of parishes. On this side is R. for such a parish, on the other side W. for such another parish. If you keep on this side you are in R., if you go beyond the stone you are in W. But that is not all. A parish map has been made, and painted in, so that all can see who choose to go and look at it, telling you the acreage and the names of every field and estate. Open your New Testament : there is the parish map of Right, and all the white outside indicated, not traced minutely, is the sprawling, abominable parish of Wrong. Look at the Sermon on the Mount, there you have some of the estates—there is the beautiful field of the Poor in Spirit—a royal demesne, it belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven. There is the water meadow of the Mourners, and down in the valley the pasture of the Meek. There is the rich yellow cornfield of those who Hunger and Thirst, and the

sweet bean-field, the smell of which is as of a field that the Lord hath blessed,—the field of the Pure in Heart. And so on. Moreover, the boundaries are traced very neatly with fine lines between the big stones. Thus, though on one stone stands only, "Thou shalt do no murder," we see by the map that "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause," steps out of the parish of Right into that of Wrong. One of the big stones has on it, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but the parish map says further, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart."

II. The light is given to show us the landmarks of Truth. Christ came into the world to reveal to man not only what is the will of God how he should live, but also the will of God what he should believe ; and He founded His Church to be as a lantern, preserving the light of the Truth in the midst of the general darkness. No man can expect to find out the truth for himself. If he tries, he will run here and there, and tumble over stones, and strike himself against walls. The old people in the ancient world did that ; they went a-seeking and they got only an inkling of the Truth. What was hid from the wise and prudent is revealed unto babes. We know what they but guessed. We walk in the light which they desired to see. We must accept Revelation and act upon it, or throw it aside and go back to the blindness of heathenism.

---

Again, we must not pick and choose for ourselves. There are twelve great stones set up as the boundaries of Christian belief, the Twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed, and these are the limits of the parish of Christian Belief. We must accept these limits and keep within them if we would remain in the parish of Truth, all outside is the wild wilderness of Error. And now I will tell you what the Church system of festivals is: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Passiontide, Easter, Ascension, Whitsuntide, Trinity, Saints' Days. It is the annual beating of the Bounds of the parish of Truth.

---

## XVIII.

### *THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF.*

**Ash Wednesday.**

---

COR. XIII. 5.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves.”

**Introduction.**—The delightful old biographer and historian Plutarch tells this story of a certain Queen Berenice. She was informed that there was at Sparta a shepherd girl who was as like her as if she were her twin sister, so like, people said, that if they were to change clothes, no one would know which was which. This filled the Queen with the liveliest interest, and she was all eagerness to see her double. How delightful, to behold herself in the idyllic simplicity of a lonely shepherdess. She could not rest till the king, at her request, had given orders that the girl should be brought to Court. Nor, on her side was the peasantess less curious to see the Queen. She had

been told over and over again that she was the speaking image of the Queen, and she had formed to herself an ideal of herself, radiant with beauty and magnificent in crown and brodered raiment. Queen Berenice was at table one day when it was announced to her that the shepherdess had arrived, and was in the ante-chamber. Without delay she sprang from her place, left the king, her guests, the table, and ran forth into the outer hall where her double was waiting. In a moment Queen and peasant girl were face to face. They stood, looked each other over, breathless, with open eyes, for a short space, then with an expression of disappointment and disgust, turned their backs on each other and ran away, the sheep-girl out of the palace, the Queen back to the dining-hall, red with shame, and her bosom heaving with anger. Each had utterly disappointed the expectations of the other.

**Subject.**—We form altogether false notions of what we are like, what our real characters are, and do not like to see ourselves as others see us and as we really are. Now in Lent the Church brings us face to face with ourselves, and insists on our examining ourselves and learning to know our own selves.

1. No man likes his own photograph—for the simple reason that it does not flatter him. He finds fault with this and that in the picture, it is too dark or too light, or the position is not easy, or there is some defect or other to be detected, but the real reason, the unadmitted

reason, why he does not like it, is because the photograph does not flatter him. The sun is not given to flattery. Nor is the Word of God. Let us look at ourselves by that light, and consider what manner of men we are, and knowing our own selves, we shall then be able to rectify what is amiss in ourselves, and draw nearer to that pattern of perfection which is set before us for our imitation. S. James says "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Then he goes on with advice to those who "seem to be religious," and he tells them plainly that they are not religious people at all for merely listening to the word and taking pleasure in hearing it, —for that true religion consists in practical benevolence, self-restraint and a good life.

Here then is one point in which we are very likely to deceive ourselves, we mistake feeling piously and charitably for acting in a devout and charitable manner. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue — that man's religion is vain." It does not matter how good you feel, what benevolent emotions swell in your heart, how full of hope you may be that your neighbour may prosper,—if you are a chatterbox and a tittle-tattler about other folks' affairs—your religion is vain.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this :—To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” It does not matter how full of devotion you may feel, how many chapters a-day of the Bible you may read, how many tears a stirring sermon may bring into your eyes, how much moral and pious sentiment you may pour from your lips,—pure and undefiled religion does not consist in this—it consists in active sympathy and passive self-restraint. Now—look at yourselves as you are ! look, like Berenice, on yourselves, stripped of all the pomps of artificiality you have put on, without the paint and powder with which you have disguised your natural face—look at all pretence of godliness washed away, at the rough reality, and you will not like it. You have been accustomed to esteem yourself religious. Look to the works. Shew me your faith by your self-restraint in tongue and temper and act, and not by profession and pious emotion. All such religion is vain.

II. S. Paul, in the passage I have chosen for my text, has no doubt somewhat excited your surprise by what he bids you examine yourselves in. He is speaking of his own weakness, and his strength which is in Christ. Our Lord was weak as to his human nature, but strong as to His divinity. “He was crucified through weakness,” that is through having a fragile human nature, “yet He liveth by the power of God,” that is He ever liveth as God-Man, through virtue of His divinity. So, argues S. Paul, we



also are subject to weakness, because our natures are infirm and mortal, but then, again, they are strong, because Christ strengthens us by His indwelling power. "We also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God." After saying this he proceeds, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves." That is to say, prove your own selves and learn how weak you are, what are your shortcomings, and where you need improvement. Then, when you know what lacks, you will have gone a good way towards being strong, in that you will know exactly what graces to ask of God, and what points you have most watchfully to defend, but you will observe—and this is the remarkable part of S. Paul's advice—he puts first this piece of advice, as though it were even more important than the other, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the Faith." He says, find out, first of all, whether you are sound in your religious belief. It is very necessary to know that the walls of the citadel are cracked and falling so as to be able to patch them up, but you must also look to the water-cistern and see that that will hold a supply of drinking-water for the garrison.

This then is another point for self-examination—The soundness of our Faith. We are too content with a weak and cloudy belief which has no strength in it, no definiteness. Let us this Lent look to our Faith, let us go over the outlines of our Creed, let us ground ourselves in our Christian belief, and make sure that our religious life rests

on substantial belief, and not on vague opinion. What we want to have before us is the outline of the Faith, sharp and distinct, that we may know exactly what we have to believe, and on what our hopes repose. We may fall into utter error and heresy if we be content to go on in hazy ideas of what our holy religion requires of us to profess. Examine yourselves therefore, I urge, whether ye be in the Faith, and prove your own selves, whether ye have in you that religion which is pure and undefiled before God.

---

## XIX.

### *THE MANNER OF KEEPING LENT.*

#### *1st Sunday in Lent.*

---

S. MATTHEW IV. 2.

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards an-hungred."

**Introduction.**—The holy season of Lent is one of preparation for a proper celebration of the great festival of Easter. And the Church directs the eyes of her children to Christ, on this first Sunday in the season, to shew them the manner in which it is to be observed. And the great lesson she seeks to inculcate is that of self-mastery.

**Subject.**—Let us then consider what is the proper way of observing this holy season.

1. In the first place let us observe that the number 40 is one of special importance in Scripture. Forty hundred years elapsed between the fall of man and the coming of Christ. When Noah entered into the ark, the rains poured down for forty days and forty nights. Moses fasted for forty days on mount Sinai before he was worthy to receive the tables of the Commandments from the hand of God. For forty days Elijah fasted till he was found worthy on Horeb to see God pass by. And for forty days did Christ fast in the wilderness. In one of the great persecutions there were forty martyrs, brave soldiers of Christ, who were exposed to death on a frozen lake ; and on the shore was a temple in which a fire burned, and warm blankets and hot drinks were prepared ready for any one of those who would abandon the faith of Christ and leave the ice and offer sacrifice in the temple. One did thus fall away. Then the thirty-nine standing on the ice raised their eyes to the starlit heavens, and prayed, "O Thou Who hast in a special manner consecrated the number forty, do Thou grant that as forty came on the ice to receive their crowns, forty may be found worthy to wear them." Their prayer was heard. A heathen soldier was sleeping in the temple, and he saw in a dream Jesus Christ in the glory of Heaven, holding forty crowns of gold. And He said, "Of the forty, one has failed, who will wear his crown?" Then the soldier started from sleep and ran out on the ice and cried, "I believe in Christ, I will renounce the gods of the heathen

and I will die for Him Who was crucified." Then those of the martyrs who were not dead rejoiced that their prayer was heard, and that though one had fallen away, another had been chosen, and forty entered together into Paradise to receive the crown of martyrs.

11. In the early Church the Christians fasted very strictly. S. Ignatius, the disciple of S. John, in an epistle to the Church of Antioch written in the year 71, or only about forty years after the death of Christ, exhorts the faithful to observe the fast with strictness.

It would startle you to know how the Lent fast was observed in those days. We know that they abstained from all food and drink during the day and only ate and drank something after the set of sun. And this—for forty days! Others ate only once or twice in the week. Others once in forty hours. Indeed, so late as the eleventh century it was not customary for Christians to eat anything in Lent till late in the afternoon, and not to touch meat the whole of Lent.

Now what was the object of this? Principally, in order that Christians might obtain mastery over themselves. If they were able to deny themselves in eating and drinking the most elementary necessities of life, they would be able to deny themselves in other matters which are not necessities at all. The object was, then, to teach self-control. Self-control in ordinary matters, so that the habit might be acquired, and when temptations arose, the

man who could hold his hand from meat and ale would have no difficulty in restraining himself from other things. If he could refrain from harmless things, he would be able to refrain from hurtful things. That was the principle, and that it is not a bad one, but a very excellent one, we may be quite sure, because Christ, Who came to set us an example, fasted Himself, not because He was in any danger of failing, not that He required to gain a mastery over Himself, but solely to shew us how we may do so.

III. But we are not acting in accordance with the spirit of the Church if we keep ourselves from eating and do not deny ourselves in other ways. Fasting is a means to an end, but it is nothing more.

We can keep Lent in the right spirit if during that season we fast with our eyes—that is restrain them from indulgence in harmless, but distracting and worldly, sights.

We can fast with our eyes—by denying them secular literature, newspaper reading, novel reading. I do not say that we are not to read magazines and newspapers and books of travel and history and so forth, in Lent, but I do say that the three-volume novel might with advantage be laid aside in Lent, and that a great deal of time wasted on magazine articles might be more profitably disposed of in devotional reading.

We can fast with our ears, by keeping away from tittle-tattle and gossiping companions.

We can fast with the tongue, by moderating our talk, by practising some reserve in our conversation. A very good thing. If we acquired a control over our tongues in Lent, we should be able to keep them from doing so much mischief out of it.

We can fast by withdrawing into privacy, by not making too many visits, by not being out seeing what is going on, and being seen, as at other times, and by using in prayer the time thus gained.

There are services in the church which can be attended. There are more frequent Communions which can be assisted at, there are sermons and instructions which may be listened to with patience if not profit ; and there are a thousand kind acts that may be done in the parish, visits to the sick and the poor, for which at other times we are too busy, which may be done now.

Let us enter into the spirit of the Church, look to our Lord, and if He condescended to keep a Lent of severe fasting, solitude, and prayer, then surely Lent, if observed with any degree of retirement, self denial and devotion, must bring with it its own reward in a more blessed Easter than those we have spent hitherto, without a Lent's preparation for them.

---

XX

JOY AND SORROW.

2nd Sunday in Lent.

---

S. MATT. XVII. 3.

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.”

**Introduction.**—On the top of Tabor, shortly before His passion, our Blessed Lord was transfigured, “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light,” and “Moses and Elias appeared in glory” and spake with Him—what of? S. Luke tells us that “they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Does not this seem strange? For a little while, before His death, Christ allows Himself a brief splendour, He assumes a glorious appearance such as He will put on after His ascension. But during that time of joy and



glory His conversation is about "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Now let us look on a little time, and we see Him on the cross, pierced with nails and dying. What more painful period! Tortured in hands and feet, all His muscles wrenched, the face of His Father turned away! And yet—on what are His thoughts, of what does He speak?

"This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," He said. He spoke of Paradise; and His thoughts S. Paul interprets when he says that "He, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." On Tabor in glory He speaks of His passion, on Calvary, in the darkness of approaching death, He thinks of the joy set before Him, and speaks of Paradise.

**Subject.**—Looking at this, I think we may see in Our Lord a fulfilment of the rule laid down by the wise man, Eccles. xi. 7.

1. In the day when all smiles, and we are surrounded by prosperity, it is well for us to consider the end, to remember that all this that we are enjoying is fleeting, that time passes, and the day must come speedily when all that gives pleasure will have ceased to please. God cast man out of Paradise, not that man should make for himself a Paradise in this world. If he attempts to do that, the angel of sorrow will come with his fiery sword, and turn him out. Have you never noticed how often it happens

that when you are especially happy, and give yourselves over with most uncontrol to the enjoyment of a cloudless prosperity, a storm is gathering which will burst on you and ruin all? This fact so struck the ancient Northmen that when they saw a man unusually merry and his face specially bright with laughter, they said he was "fey"—doomed to death or some terrible calamity. I would have you look back at the past, and I doubt not you will most of you recall circumstances which confirm what I say. An eminent man lately dead (Lord Beaconsfield) truly said, "Nothing happens but the unexpected." It is when we least anticipate evil that the news of it comes on us. Then I say—let us not attempt to make to ourselves a hedge round Paradises for ourselves here on earth, as if we were to live in them happily for ever. The serpent will penetrate, and the sword of the angel expel.

See Dives in the parable. He did nothing, so far as we are aware, actually wrong. He was not a thoroughly bad man; but he was a thoughtless man. In the day of good things, he did not remember the evil days. He ate and drank, faring sumptuously every day, and clothed himself in purple and fine linen every day, and never for one moment considered that for all these things God would bring him into judgment, that he would have to account for Lazarus being left at his gate neglected, and for his five brethren to whom he had set an example of frivolity and luxury. "Son," said Abraham, "remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and

likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

*Remember*, notice the word. In Hell, Dives has as an accession of his torment to remember his past happiness, "Thou hadst thy good things;" because when in the receipt of his good things he would not remember that a time would come when he would be deprived of them all. Lazarus on the other hand, we may well believe, in the midst of his evil things looked forward in hope and faith to the good things which were in store for him.

It is therefore well for us that we, in the time of prosperity, should think of adversity, in time of health and happiness consider their transitoriness, in time of life think of death.

II. Secondly. In time of sadness and loss and privation, let us think of Heaven, its joys, its comforts. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. "In the midst of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul." This is what David said, and he had much experience of trouble. Driven from his royal city by a rebel son, deserted by his friends, treated with vulgar insult, dependent on alms for his bread,—what does he say? "In the midst of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul."

A story is told of one of the saints (S. John Cantius) that whenever he met with great affliction, and whenever

he was insulted and maltreated, he said nothing but "Above." That was his consolation, that his joy. Whatever took place to trouble his peace, "Above," was rest, was rest for evermore. Whatever befell him through the malignity of evil men, "Above," the wicked cease from troubling. Whatever domestic losses he had to endure, "Above," all who have parted will meet again. Whatever sorrows, in short, may have caused the tears to fill his eyes, "Above," God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His elect.

I remember to have read a striking paper in a book written by a French unbeliever. The book is on the abolition of religion, the writer disbelieves in God and thinks that people should no more be told that there is a God. He disbelieves in the immortality of the soul and holds that no hope of immortality should be held out to people, and then he goes on to inculcate morality as not based on any doctrine of rewards and punishments. But he makes a curious admission. He says that he was one day talking to an old nurse of his, then decrepit, bowed double, and full of infirmity, when she told him of her poverty, her sufferings, and her losses of all she loved. He did not know what to say to her except 'Well, this is the common lot of humanity,' which did not seem to console her. But whilst they were speaking, a priest passed, and as he did so, he noticed the old woman's tears streaming, and the look of distress on her features. He did not speak, but held up his finger and pointed to

heaven. At once a sweet smile broke out on the old woman's face, her tears dried, and she said, "After all, this is for a moment, and then succeeds—Heaven for ever."

Now, adds the unbeliever, this will be our difficulty when we have done away with religion, and taught people to disbelieve in God. We may inculcate a pure morality, but we shall never be able to supply consolations to sufferers. That is the rock on which we shall go shipwreck.

My Brethren—think in every trouble, in every loss,—Heaven!

---

XXI.

*THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.*

*2nd Sunday in Lent.*

---

S. MATT. XV. 22.

"O Lord, Thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

**Introduction.**—The Evangelist S. Mark adds that the devil which vexed the poor girl was "an unclean spirit." It is remarkable that in both the Gospels this narrative of the cure of the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, should follow our Lord's warning words, "These things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart ; and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." We know now that there the devil was lodged, and that evidence of his presence was given. He was lodged in the heart, and he gave token that he

was there by the talk that slipped from the girl's tongue.

The devil was an "unclean" one, and her talk was unclean. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The foul, horrible thoughts formed within her were given utterance on her tongue. I do not suppose that the "young girl," as she is called by S. Mark, was a profligate abandoned wretch, but simply a nasty-minded girl, a girl who liked to think, and read, and talk about, and look at low, disgusting and unseemly matters. This was the difference between her and the Magdalen. The latter had been a woman who had lost her character, and was possessed by seven devils, of which probably the devil of drink and the devil of lust were two, what the others were I do not know. But this girl was not gone astray by any outward act, she had, however, all those low, sensual, and unclean tastes and ideas, which threatened her with a horrible future, and made her mother most anxious about her.

You may remember another case,—that of a boy also troubled with an unclean spirit. His father brought his case before Christ, just as the mother brought this of the girl before Him. In the case of the boy the father besought Christ, "Master, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him and he groaneth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And as he was yet a-coming the devil threw him down,

and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father." In this case the foul spirit seems to have been combined with a violent and even furious temper, not an uncommon association in the young.

You will observe, also, that neither seems to have been in the least conscious of the condition he or she was in, and it was in each case the anxious parent who by prayer obtained the cure.

**Subject.**—Now I am not going to speak of the spirit of lust, but simply of the spirit which is unclean, which lodges still in too many Christian hearts.

1. It is quite true that these two spirits are so closely allied that where one is found there very often the other is also. Where, for instance, the spirit of lust is, there he always introduces also his twin-brother spirit, the devil of uncleanness. But it is not always so. There are people who lead very moral and decent lives, who yet allow this second, milder-natured, spirit a lodgment in their hearts, and permit him to speak with their tongues.

I will describe this devil to you ; and then I will advise you to light a candle and take a stick, and go all through the chambers of your heart, and rout in every corner, and if you find that vile devil crouching there, to dislodge him at once and turn him out.



Now, what is this devil of uncleanness like? He is a small spirit. He is not a very violent spirit. He does not make a great noise. He lies in a corner, and waits till something is brought in,—some news, some new acquaintance, some story, some conversation, and then he goes over it all like a snail, leaving a slimy trail upon all.

A person troubled with an unclean spirit, whatever he or she sees or hears or thinks of, is sure to have the presence of the unclean spirit felt, affecting what is seen and heard and thought of, tainting it. Some nasty idea, some unsavoury resemblance, some gross joke, obtrudes itself at once.

There is a being, the product of our literature, who lives actively in this century, called the Critic. Now the Critic is a person endued with a captious spirit. He lives only to see faults, and he has no pleasure save in blemishes. If he goes to a concert, the beauty of the music passes unheeded, his ears are eager and open to catch a defect in the rendering, or a weakness in the composition. If he goes to a picture-gallery, the colours and forms give him no delight, he is keen in quest of false drawing and crude painting, and he fastens at once on these when he finds them. If he reads a book, its graces of style, its freshness of ideas, tease him and do not give him pleasure, he turns the leaves, looking, not for beauties, but for defects, and the moment he lights on these, he settles down content.

Well, the unclean spirit is something like the captious spirit, it is always on the look out for the nasty, the ugly, the defective, and it is uneasy when in the presence of the beautiful, and the pure, and the holy, till it has detected a wrinkle, a spot, an evil in them. It is always hunting after low aims, base passions, as motives for action. His delight is in studying the seamy side of life. I remember a man who, whenever shown a picture, turned it round to look at the canvas behind. So it is with those possessed with this spirit, they are ever turning round the beautiful, the good, the true, to see the hidden and unworthy side of the picture. Of course, in all that is human there is a coarse web and woof—a poor mean canvas; but it is only the captious and unclean spirits which care for the canvas, and not for the painting that glorifies and disguises it.

II. Those possessed by the unclean spirit will never get rid of it so long as they love to harbour it, and carry it food. Starve it, drive it from corner to corner with a stick, and it will decamp. But that is not what many do. They are always feeding and pampering the spirit with tit-bits, and he fattens and grows lusty under this treatment.

On a summer's day, as you are walking through the lanes or woods, have you not come on a swarm of blue-bottle and other flies buzzing, and in such numbers that you have stood still in surprise, and then gone to the spot and looked and found that there was a bit of carrion or

something of the sort, and it was about this that the flies were dancing and making such a hum? Now it is not only the vulgar fly that loves nasty things. The most noble butterfly we have, the Purple Emperor, who flies so high as not to be caught in a net, also loves what is nasty, and will descend from his height to settle on a bit of putrid meat. It is so in life. It is not only the low and common who love nasty gossip, nasty novels, nasty police reports, nasty French plays, but those also who soar in high life, the Purple Emperors of society. You look up—and high in the golden sunshine, above the oak-tree tops you see the waverings of their beautiful wings. O, the unapproachable creatures! Throw down a scrap of putrid meat, and see! down come your Purple Emperors, and light upon it.

Now, however, let us address the blue-bottles, and common humble flies who buzz in every parish. What do you like? Where do you gather? About what do you hum? Is it not about every nasty little bit of scandal?

In England, I am sorry to say, the daily press is the great purveyor of carrion to the blue-bottles. The morning paper arrives. Buzz! buzz! down they settle—not on the general news, they care not for that; not on the parliamentary debates, they are indifferent to great social questions; not on information concerning scientific discoveries, they care naught for them; but on the last particulars of some recent divorce case, or the horrible

details of some murder. Let there be any scandal in the neighbourhood, and—buzz ! buzz ! all the flies are about and humming, dashing here and there, and making as great a noise with their tongues, as if an earthquake had happened.

**Conclusion.**—Our Lord said, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed, that is, are they in whose heart the unclean spirit—the spirit that loves everything low, coarse, unholy, is absent. They only are fit to see God. As for those others ! How can they see and care for God, when they look for only what is dark and foul ? How can they love the things of God, when their taste is for carrion ? How can they enter into the Paradise of God, out of which is banished all that is unclean ?

Therefore, lastly :—If you find, on examination, that there is within, hidden in the smallest corner of your heart, this unclean spirit—the best piece of advice I can give you is—Starve him out ! Give him nothing to eat of that nasty food on which alone he can live. Smoke him out ! with the incense of prayer. Drive him out ! with the broom of a good sweeping and thorough examination of conscience.

---

XXII.

*THE TALKATIVE SPIRIT.*

*3rd Sunday in Lent.*

---

S. LUKE XI. 14.

"Jesus was casting out a devil, and it was dumb."

**Introduction.**—It is certainly remarkable how few are the words in which the casting out of the dumb spirit are recorded. S. Luke says :—" And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake "—that is all.

S. Matthew says, " They brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil, and when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake "—that is all. On another occasion, " There was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb : and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb spake and saw "—that is all.

The reason why so little is said of these miracles was that the dumb devils made such slight resistance. There was, so to say, no extraordinary going out of virtue from Christ to heal those troubled with them. It was different with other spirits, those that were unclean, for instance. One cast the boy down and tare him before he came out, and then left him as one dead. Those who inhabited the man living in the tombs, exceeding fierce, made a great to-do before they came out, and they could be hardly faced till a receptacle was provided for them—the herd of swine.

But there is one sort of devil I do not read of our Lord ever casting out—ever even attempting to expel—the spirit of chattering; that talkative devil which inhabits so many Christians, and does such an infinite amount of mischief.

And I will tell you why:—I believe that those possessed with this devil had made themselves so offensive to every one they came in contact with, that not one of them had got a friend who would come and see our Lord for his or her cure. Also, this is a devil who cannot be cast out without the will of the person possessed of it. That person must know how dreadful a devil is lodged in him, and must desire to get rid of him, or Christ can do nothing for him. I say him—but as a general rule this spirit generally takes up his abode in women rather than men. Still there are talkative, meddlesome, mis-

chievous, chattering men as well as women, only where there is one of these there are ten of the others.

**Subject.**—I am going to speak to-day of the Talkative Spirit, the mischief he does, and how he is to be cast out.

1. S. James devotes a whole chapter to the mischiefs of chattering. He does not mince matters, and speak smooth things about talkative spirits. He says "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us ; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of Hell." Do you note ? It—that talkative tongue—is set on fire of Hell. That is to say, there is a devil of Hell who sets it in a blaze, and is the source of all the mischief it works. Now, a talkative tongue does not only wag about all the gossip and scandal in the parish, but it also acts as a pretty sharp sting to all in the house and all the neighbours who come near. There is a scolding tongue as well as a chattering tongue. And some have got, like serpents, split tongues, or double tongues, one chattering and the other scolding ; one making mischief outside the

house, the other making mischief inside the house. There are goodnatured mischief-makers who are not scolders, and there are scolders, who are not mischief-makers, but these are more generally both combined in one. A chattering tongue very often is a lying tongue, not that it is wilful in the invention of falsehood, but it speaks the untruth because it must say something. Half the gossiping, malicious stories that go the round of a parish have their origin thus. There is probably no foundation for them except in the imagination of the chatterer.

The moon turns on its axis and revolves round the world, and the world rotates in twenty-four hours, and revolves round the sun; and recently astronomers have discovered that the sun also is turning—spinning in space—and revolving round—what do you think?—nothing. It will take, I dare not say how many, hundreds of thousands of years to go solemnly spinning and rotating round—nothing, a point where the best telescope can discern—nothing. Now a great deal of the talk in a neighbourhood and parish if searched into is found to revolve in like manner round nothing; and one system of gossip after another starts out of this great central revolution of the original myth round nothing. It has sometimes been my duty and misfortune to sift some of these scandalous stories, and I have found, not infrequently, that they rotated round an invisible point in the invention of the first originator of the story.



11. There is something very dispiriting in what S. James says, "Every kind of beasts, and of herbs, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." He seems, at first sight, to lay down that it is perfectly hopeless to attempt the cure of chatterboxes and scolds, that there is nothing to be done but to treat them as incurables, and lock them up in asylums, or smother them under feather-beds like those afflicted with hydrophobia. And when we remember that Our Lord never attempted the cure of any of these creatures, we become very downcast and despairing. But after all, just at the last, S. James does give us a glimmer of hope. He says, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be," and again, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." As he gives this advice, I think he did have some hopes that there was a cure. And indeed there is no devil so strong, but that Christ can cast him out. A strong devil armed keepeth his palace, and his goods are at peace, but Christ is stronger than he, and can rob him of his armour wherein he trusted, and divide the spoil. The cursing tongue begins to bless God, the slanderous tongue to speak kindly, the scolding tongue to exercise restraint, the bitter tongue to drop sweet words. Yes! thank God, even this evil spirit can be cast out, but this cometh not but by prayer and fasting—not fasting from meat, but

from what is dearer than meat—talking. Let a great control be kept on the tongue, let discipline be exercised over the words. Let nothing be said about another which has not first been passed through the sieves. Is it true?—is it kind?—and, is it necessary?—and then, that unruly member being brought under order, the devil who has used it, setting it on fire from Hell, will depart, and in his place will reign that wisdom which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

---

XXIII.

*THE SLAVISH SPIRIT.*

*4th Sunday in Lent.*

---

GAL. IV. 31.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

**Introduction.**—S. Paul is contrasting two spirits which govern religious people, the Slavish Spirit and the Loving Spirit,—which latter is, in reality, the Spirit of Freedom. There are those who serve God with a grudging obedience, to whom their religious duties are irksome, who hate the bondage of the moral law, and yet know that they must not shake it off, who spend their whole lives in a sort of sulk against God.

On the other hand, there are those who serve God with loving obedience, to whom obedience is the free and frank

tender of homage without any sense of constraint in it; who delight in performing their religious duties, and to whom the observance of the moral law is the very law of their life—they simply could not endure to live beyond it.

These two spirits S. Paul regards as those which influence slaves and sons respectively. The slave obeys his master because he fears a beating unless he does obey. The son obeys his father because he loves his father with all his heart, and he knows that his father's commands are for his own advantage, and that no one has his welfare so near his heart as his own dear father.

S. Paul moreover tells us that the Slavish Spirit of obedience was that under which the Jews fulfilled the obligations of the Law. And he goes on to say that the loving spirit of obedience is that which is expected of us Christians living under the Gospel dispensation. "We were under bondage," he says, but "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son.

**Subject.**—This then is the drift of S. Paul's words. We are no longer slaves, but sons; under the old Dispensation God beat and punished His chosen people to

make them obey, and they did obey, but with a servile, grudging service. Now we are under the new Dispensation, which is that of Love, and God hath showed His love for us in sending His Son to become man and redeem us. Therefore, as we are sons, the spirit of sons is expected to reign in us, and we are to be found crying not “Master ! Master !” but “Abba ! Father !”

1. The attendance at Church—in a word—worship, may be given in the servile or in the filial spirit.

If on Sundays and festivals we go to Church simply because we know it is right, as a duty, but groan over the obligation, and are delighted to have it over—then we are acting in the matter of worship in the spirit of servants, and not of sons.

I know, and quite admit, that divine service has been rendered so hideous and repellent by the miserable arrangements of our churches, and the carelessness with which it has been rendered, in past times, that there is great excuse for the people in England for looking on their attendance at public worship as a dreadful necessity and not as a pleasure, still—things are better now, and as we render divine service more decent and beautiful, we may well hope that the spirit of sons will wake up in the hearts of worshippers, in place of the spirit of bondage.

I was very much struck with the remark of a friend one Sunday. We were in Bavaria. It was a pouring rainy

day, and we had to go to Church under umbrellas and in waterproofs, yet we found the Church crammed from end to end, with not even standing-room, so that men had to overflow into the porch and street outside. When we came out, my friend, not accustomed to foreign travel, only used to English life, said to me, "How those people must be looked after by their priests in the week, and given a good lecture if they did not show their faces in church on Sunday."

The remark made me laugh, it showed such utter inability to see that Christian people can be actuated by any other spirit than that of bondage. I know nothing more sad and humiliating than that the clergy should have to—so to speak—drive their parishioners to church on Sundays. Do you know that about two hundred to three hundred years ago, after the Reformation, the constables of every parish had to force the parishioners to go to Church, and if they did not show in their places on Sundays, they were dragged before the magistrates and fined? There was the Spirit of Bondage and fear enthroned in the room of the Spirit of Adoration and Love. Well, to return to this Bavarian congregation which had assembled in the rain. If they had heard the remark I did, I have little doubt they would have answered much to this effect, "Our clergy never ask us whether we go to church or not, they take it as a matter of course that we go. We are not sheep to be driven into the fold by the barking of dogs, but sheep who hear the voice of the

Shepherd and follow Him. We have not received in the Christian Church the Spirit of Bondage, but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

Now I would have you consider what worship means.

On one day in the week, at least, God expects all His children to assemble before Him, that He may look them all in the face and wish them all a happy return of the day. He expects all His children to assemble before Him, to render to Him their homage, and offer Him their dutiful love. Just as a father, when he is absent on business all through the week, when he comes home for the Sunday, expects his children to come round him, and climb on his knee, and kiss him, and say, "Dear father! so glad to see you home again! I wish you were always with us!" so does God the Father expect His sons to crowd round Him on Sunday, in His House, and cry to Him in the Spirit of Adoption, Abba! Father! And just as a father absent all the week would be hurt and troubled if some of his children kept away and did not show, to wish him a good day, and with their smiles to testify their pleasure at seeing him, so is God grieved if some of His children do not appear in His House on Sunday, but lounge about the lanes, or lie in bed and never come near Him.

And again, if one of his boys came slouching in with a hang-dog look, and a sulky eye, with his hands in his pockets, and would say nothing, but sat down in the

corner—a father would say, “My boy, why don't you say, ‘Good day, dear father,’ and look up and give me a smile, and hold up your head and say you are glad to see me? I am afraid, my lad, that you have no love for me, and that you only came in to see me as a slave would come before his master.” So if some of you come to church merely because you think you must, and not because it is a pleasure to you to come and see God and praise Him, then you are servants, not sons.

II. Secondly :—Endurance of suffering may be servile or filial. It is true that we, though children, have yet to bear much pain and sorrow. Not that God careth not for us, but that He sees that chastisement is necessary in some cases; and then again, much pain comes to us, not as chastisement at all, but as love to draw us to love Him alone instead of loving other things. I have told you a remark of a friend of mine on public worship. I will tell you the remark of a lady made to me on suffering. She said to me, “I cannot make out why the Almighty beats me like a dog. He is always striking at me, and I crouch in one corner and then am driven out with a cry of pain into another, and a blow is again levelled at me and I start from that. I spend my whole life in crying out at the beatings I get.” I was silent a moment, and then I answered, “If you will snarl at God like a cur, you must not be surprised if He beats you like a cur.” Then you have the Slavish Spirit viewing all sufferings as chastisements administered by an angry and heartless master.



Let us, however, lick the hand that wounds instead of snapping at it, and we shall soon see that it administers also the Balm of Gilead to heal all wounds. Indeed, believe me, nothing draws the heart nearer to God, nothing makes it so gush out with love and faith, as suffering, if received in a filial spirit, but nothing embitters, hardens, freezes more than suffering if received in a Slavish Spirit.

---

XXIV.

*THE SELF-SUFFICIENT SPIRIT.*

**5th Sunday in Lent.**

---

S, JOHN VIII. 50.

“I seek not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and judgeth.”

**Introduction.**—If you will look at the Gospel for to day, you will notice a great contrast between the behaviour of Christ and that of the Jews. He asks them a question : “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And, if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” No, not one question, but two. The Jews do not answer either. In fact, they cannot. There was no sin to be found in Him, of which they could convince Him. And there was no excuse for their not believing in Him. What answer then, do they make? Listen—Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? They reply by a brutal insult. The

most opprobrious term they could think of they employed, they called Him a Samaritan, and then they said He had a devil. But observe further, instead of answering His questions, they asked Him one. Note also the different manner in which Christ addresses them. They answered His question with rudeness, He replies with a quiet answer to the question. 'I have not a devil.' He did not reply to the former part of the question, for it was unnecessary. They said, "Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan?" knowing all the time that He was not. He came from Nazareth in Galilee, and not from Samaria. The latter part of their question He did answer, and they did not answer His questions at all.

**Subject.**—Now the spirit ruling these Jews was the Spirit of Self-sufficiency, and this had two effects: It blinded them to the truth, and it made them insolent.

1. The Spirit of Self-sufficiency blinded them to the truth. It does so still. I must tell you what the Spirit of Self-sufficiency means, and then you will at once see what a blinding spirit it is.

The Spirit of Self-sufficiency is that spirit in man which makes him quite content with himself. It makes him content with (*a*) his mental condition, and with (*b*) his moral, and with (*c*) his spiritual condition.

*a.* When a man is content with what he knows, then there is no chance of his learning. Generally, young men

who have learned a little and read a few books are full of this spirit, they think they know everything, and that their opinions are as good as those of their seniors, whereas the very humblest and most self-distrusting men are generally the most profoundly read and widely learned. For the more a man knows the more he sees his own ignorance.

b. When a man is content with his own moral condition, there is not much chance of his becoming a better man; for when he does anything wrong, he does not reproach himself for it, but he excuses himself. And so long as a man excuses instead of accusing himself, there is no chance of his becoming a man who will grow daily more like Christ. He does not see and acknowledge his defects, and therefore makes no attempts to correct them.

c. When a man is content with his own spiritual condition, then that spiritual life which is in him is at a stand still. The spiritual life is that inner life which is divine. It is that life which lives only in the atmosphere of prayer and meditation, and feeds sacramentally on its Lord. It is a life that, if active, is always yearning upwards, and straining after the perfect sight of God, when all clouds shall have passed away out of the sky. But when there is self-satisfaction, when a man supposes that he has attained to a perfect walk with God, then his spiritual life has attained to nothing but a state of stagnation. When our Lord said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and

thirst after righteousness" he spoke of those with a healthy spiritual condition. That is an ever hungry, ever thirsty condition, one that is always wanting to take and eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and to drink of the Waters of Life freely. But if there be no hunger and thirst after righteousness, then the life of the spirit is dead or asleep.

II. Secondly. You will notice that the Spirit of Self-sufficiency made the Jews insolent and abusive. It has much the same nature now-a-days among Christians. If they think themselves perfect and superior to everyone else, then they are rude and impertinent, sometimes brutal, towards any who stand above them on a higher mental, moral, or spiritual level. They are angry because they see something higher than themselves, and they try to lift themselves by abuse of the others. True courtesy is the growth of humility. No man respects another more than he who knows his own deficiencies.

**Conclusion.**—And now lastly; The Spirit of Humility is that which is the reverse of that Spirit of Self-sufficiency which is so injurious to the Christian life. I do not see how the Spirit of Self-sufficiency is to be expelled, and the Spirit of Humility to be introduced, except by the practice of close and strict self-examination. By that a man must learn his defects, must learn where he really stands, and must learn how much he needs. Then, when he has acquired *that*—all the rest will follow, daily growth mental, moral and spiritual, but without that, there is only death.

XXV.

MERCY AND JUSTICE.

**Palm Sunday.**

---

S. MATT. XXI. 5

"Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek."

**Introduction.**—This is about the only idea a great number of people have of Christ. He is all meekness. They neglect their duties, relying on His gentleness: He will not be hard with them. They break His commandments: He is too good to punish them. They die without any real penitence, trusting in His mercy. In fact, to them the mercy of God is a reason for neglecting every duty, doing wickedness, and not repenting. God sent His Son into the world to make the world worse than it was,—to enable men to follow their vicious appetites and indulge in their indolence,—with impunity. This seems startling, and yet it really is what the Christian scheme means, if the view of it taken by these persons be right.

But it is not right. They have got hold of one truth, but they have forgotten another. God is, indeed, merciful, but He is also just.

Many love to picture Christ as always opening His mouth to bless, as holding for His sceptre the harmless reed, as seated on the rainbow. But they forget that He is pictured in Scripture as a King out of Whose mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, as ruling the nations with a rod of iron, as sitting on the rainbow in judgment.

**Subject.**—It is true that Christ our King cometh to us in meekness and mercy, but He comes also in justice and judgment.

1. He comes in mercy.

In the days of the Emperor Vespasian an order was issued to the Roman world that all men should give in the names and attributes of the gods they regarded as supreme. The number of the gods was so great that it filled several volumes. Then there rose a dispute as to which were the chief among so many. And one contended that the greatest god was Bacchus, the god of wine ; but another said Mars, the god of war ; and a third said, No, Plutus, the god of gold ; and a fourth said, Greater than all is Apollo, the god of wisdom. Then there came into the court a man who bore the image of a youth, and on the pedestal was written, " I promise, I expect, I pardon." And the man who carried this image said,

"This is the figure of the chief god of all, the God of Mercy."

Whom he meant I do not know, but I do know that Him, Whom he imagined we Christians have, our God of Mercy, He who came to-day, riding into Jerusalem, meek and lowly, and who on Friday will hang on the Cross, crying to the world, "I promise, I expect, I pardon."

a. "I promise." Yes! and who can make such promises as our most merciful God? He promises the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to be with us, to teach us, to strengthen us, to sustain us. He promises to be with us unto the end of the world. He promises, "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee." He promises the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. He promises to raise us from our graves, and bring us, redeemed in body as in soul, into His eternal and glorious kingdom.

b. "I expect." He hangs on the Cross with widespread arms, ready to embrace all who will come to Him. "All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." He is long-suffering and patient, waiting for the wicked to turn from the evil of his ways and repent, expecting him to come, and fly from evil and from the poisonous stings of his fiery passions to the cross, to be healed.

c. "I pardon." "He that cometh unto Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Out of the abundance of



His mercy He is ready to forgive. His mercy is over all His works. With His precious Blood He taketh away the sin of the world, and reconciles sinners with the Father.

II. So far, so good. It is quite true, and I am the last to deny it, that our God is a God of mercy. But we shall greatly err if we look at Him as a God of mercy apart from justice.

What would an earthly government come to, suppose the king were so full of mercy that he forgave all transgressions against the laws. With the crown, you know, is the prerogative of pardon. The crown can remit every punishment, even that of death. But this prerogative is exercised rarely. Now suppose that every murderer were pardoned and turned adrift on society, that the king was so tender-hearted that he pitied every thief and burglar, and threw open the prison doors to them after sentence. A pretty life we should lead ! Society would be turned upside down, all the quiet, honest, law-abiding citizens would become a prey to the disorderly, dishonest, and lawless. No life would be safe, no property secure.

Now it is the same in the kingdom of Heaven. God is not merciful to make men worse ; He is just, to make them conscientious ; and merciful only so as to pardon when they have done their human utmost and failed. "He loveth righteousness and judgment," says David ; and he adds : "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." The two are tied together, they cannot be

separated,—goodness and judgment, mercy and righteousness. In the 45th psalm we have the same again. The Psalmist is describing the glories of Christ's reign. He says, "Full of grace are Thy lips," that is, full of love and purity and tenderness ; but he adds, "Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh," because He is also most just to execute judgment, "Ride on, because of the word of Truth, of Meekness and Righteousness." Here we have Christ's reign shown us as one of truth, of gentleness and forgiveness, and also, last, not least, of strict justice.

**Conclusion.**—Now let us not forget this, let us not go to sleep in a false security. Let us not take matters easily, and make no effort to obey God, and to use grace, and to advance in our Christian life ; for if God be pitiful and tender, and not a hard and exacting Master, nevertheless He is just, and will reckon with us all in righteousness, according as were our opportunities, and our knowledge, and our talents.

---

XXVI.

*FAT AND LEAN KINE.*

*Maundy Thursday*

---

S. JOHN XIII. 2.

"Supper being ended."

**Introduction.**—King Pharaoh had a dream. He stood beside the river Nile, rolling down its rich waters, that fertilise the whole land of Egypt, and which, dividing into several channels, flow into the sea. All that delta, made of the deposit of the river, is rich in the extreme, rich as pasture, rich as corn land. And there, in that most fertile delta, stood King Pharaoh. Now what did he see? There were fourteen cows feeding in a meadow. Of these seven were well-favoured and fat-fleshed, and seven were ill-favoured and lean-fleshed, and these stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. They drank of the

same water, they pastured off the same grass, in the same meadow, and yet seven were ill-favoured, and seven were well-favoured, seven were fat-fleshed, and seven were lean-fleshed.

After that King Pharaoh had another dream. Out of the same rich corn-land in the delta of the Nile came up fourteen ears of corn, but of these seven were rank and good, and seven were thin and blasted with the east wind. They grew in the same corn-field, out of the same rich alluvial soil, and were watered with the same rains, and ripened with the same sun—yet—what a difference !

**Subject.**—It is remarkable that we should find so many who live in the same Church, receive the Sacraments, hear the word of God, of whom some only grow up well-favoured and good, whereas others remain ill-favoured and thin.

1. The Church is like the delta of the Nile, watered by the fertilising river of Divine Grace, ever flowing, and at seasons overflowing.

That precious river—it is the same river that maketh glad the city of God, the river of the water of life, continues from age to age to roll on, never losing its richness, unexhausted in its fertilising power, undiminished in volume, unshrunk in its bed. It divides into many channels, for grace flows through many; through the main sacraments, and through the smaller sacramental

rites. Wherever the Church cuts a dyke and opens a sluice, there the life-giving water goes. It is not a matter of numbers,—it is how many and how ramified the channels, the more the better, the more the wider extent of soil is watered, and freshened, and fattened. Once the great Mesopotamian plain was covered with a network of canals through which the precious water of Tigris and Euphrates were conducted, and then that plain waved with corn, and was pastured on by countless herds. Now the two rivers roll alone undiverted, and all the plain, except on their immediate banks, is desert. What was—and what is ! a melancholy picture, not without its analogue in the history of the Christian religion.

II. The grace of God is given to every man to profit withal. If the stream of grace flow, it is that it may nourish and invigorate. We receive grace in order that we may grow by its means, that we may grow stronger to resist evil, more confident to meet Satan, more sure in our Christian walk, more diligent in our vocation, more spiritually-minded, and less given to mind carnal things. The grace of God is not given to us to be wasted. If we partake of it, we have no right to remain stationary, not advancing in growth, lean and ill-favoured, thin and blasted with the east wind. The east wind blew over the flat arable land of the Nile mouth, and seven ears bent before it and recovered, and were as full of corn, and golden, and healthy as before. But seven turned black, and their kernels shrivelled, and the ears drooped, and

the husks filled with dust. So is it with Christians, some meet temptation and trial, and bear it, others give way and are blighted. And yet both have partaken of the same gift of grace, have fed on the same Sacraments. How is this?

III. Because in some is the assimilating power, in others there is none. Do you remember the collect, "Grant that we may read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest"—the Holy Scriptures. We pray that we may not only learn God's word, but that having taken it into our hearts, it may then be digested, that is, transformed and taken up into our systems, may enter into our flesh, and bone, and blood.

A man may eat, but his food will do him no good unless he can digest it. He may eat more than he can digest, and then it does him more harm than good. If he have a good digestion, what he eats is taken up by his system, and transformed by a marvellous hidden process into the very body he bears about with him, into his flesh, and blood, and bone, and brain.

Now it is just the same with Grace, it will do us good if we digest it, but if we do not, it will do us none. The reason why there are so many Christians, so many communicants, who are like Pharaoh's lean cattle and blighted ears, is because they have no digestive power—or do not try to digest what grace they receive.

Remember, therefore, it is not the amount of Grace you receive, the number of Communion you make, which will profit you, but the capacity you have to take into your system, and turn to good use, what you receive.

**Conclusion.**—Now then, take this advice from me. If you are not advancing in Grace, if you appear lean and ill-favoured, diminish rather than increase your Communion, and be very careful to make use of those you do receive. A few properly prepared for, and afterwards diligently followed up into devout exercises, will do more good than many carelessly received.

---

## XXVII.

### *SHIFTED RESPONSIBILITIES.*

**Good Friday.**

---

S. MATT. XXVII. 4.

"What is that to us? See thou to that."

**Introduction.**—When Adam and Eve had sinned, and God sought to bring them to a confession of their sin, each began to shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of another. God asked Adam, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" Instead of answering frankly in the affirmative, Adam put the blame off on Eve: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." You will remark here that reproach is even implied against God. "The woman whom *Thou* gavest me." It is as though Adam said, "I should not have



sinned had I been left alone in the garden, but Thou sawest fit to send a temptress to be with me, and so—this is the natural consequence.” God did not notice the implied reproach, He asked Eve: “What is this that thou hast done?” She also cannot answer directly, but shifts the blame on to the serpent: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

**Subject.**—From the time of the first man and first woman it has been the characteristic of men, and women, and children, whenever they have done what is wrong, to throw the responsibility off themselves on others. Sometimes even they reproach God Himself for having placed them in situations open to temptation, or for having given them passions which incline them to fall under temptation, or for having surrounded them with companions who lead them into temptation. “Every man,” says S. James, “when he is tempted, is drawn away by his own lust and enticed, therefore, let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.”

1. It is worthy of notice how this tendency of human frailty comes to the surface in the sad story of Good Friday.

In the first place we have it in Annas and Caiaphas.

As soon as Christ was taken by the servants of Caiaphas the High Priest, they led Him to Annas. He was taken indeed to Caiaphas first, but the High Priest sent Him

without a hearing to his father-in-law, as a graceful compliment to his superior age and wisdom. But Annas was not to be outdone in courtesy. He sent Him back bound to Caiaphas, and in his hall of judgment the hearing took place. This sending from Caiaphas to Annas, and from Annas back to Caiaphas, was not mere compliment, though it was given this outward colour and complexion. The real reason why Caiaphas sent Christ to his father-in-law, and why this old father-in-law promptly returned Him to the High Priest, was that both felt that they were doing wrong, they were condemning the innocent blood, and each wanted to shift the responsibility of the blood on to the shoulders of the other.

It was the same when He stood before Pilate. Pilate knew that Christ was innocent, and yet that the blood-thirsty rabble must be satisfied with His execution, so he tried to shift the responsibility of condemning Him on to Herod; but he did not openly avow this, he made it a matter of courtesy, as if he wished in no way to transgress etiquette. He learned that Christ came from Nazareth, and belonged therefore to Herod's jurisdiction. But Herod also felt a scruple about incurring the guilt of innocent blood, and he promptly sent Christ back to Pilate. Christ was born at Bethlehem, and therefore most properly belonged to the jurisdiction of Pilate, and the offence for which He was to be tried was committed in Judæa, where Pilate was governor. All these mutual civilities meant nothing more than that each wanted to throw the guilt on

the other. Then, when Pilate had condemned the guiltless, he called for a basin of water, and solemnly washed his hands before the people, and cast the blame on the people : " I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it !" Was there ever such a case of self-deception ? He, the judge, was responsible for the right carriage of justice, and yet he thinks to cleanse himself of guilt by casting the blame on the accusers, and washing his hands in a basin !

And there was that other case of Judas. " Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us ? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

Here you have the same again. Judas tries, by returning the money, to cast from him the responsibility for the condemnation of Jesus, upon the chief priests and elders who had bribed him to the betrayal of his Master. But they refuse to receive the money again, and relieve his conscience, and saddle themselves with the crime. " What is that to us, that thou hast done a wickedness ? Thou hast taken the money, thou hast sold a friend, thou hast brought innocent blood on thine own head. The sin has been committed by thee, see thou to that."

II. Now, my brethren, is it not much the same with us? Whenever we sin, our first impulse is to find some one on whom to lay the blame, other shoulders upon which to fit the responsibility for our misdoing. We become angry with those who led us into sin, or those who might have prevented us from sinning, but did not interfere. We are wroth with God for not arresting our course; the only persons with whom we are not angry are ourselves. Or if we do not accuse other persons, we throw the blame on our own infirmity. The flesh God has given unto us enticed us, the feeble will God gave us failed us, and so we fell. Always some excuse. The blame lies at other doors.

But:—do not let us deceive ourselves. I asked just now, was there ever such a delusion as that of Pilate, who thought to wash off his responsibilities with a little soap, and leave them in the basin with the dirty water? Quite as great delusions occur every day among Christians. But let them be warned. In spite of basin and soap, in our Creed we proclaim every day that Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” the blood sticks, the blame remains, and—Pilate suffers at this moment awful woes, though he deceived his conscience for a little while. Let us beware lest we, in like manner, deceive ourselves, and wake one day to find that the responsibilities we have so lightly shifted on to other shoulders, in God’s eyes have never been removed, and for them we must be tried.

XXVIII.

*THAT WHICH LIVES.*

**Easter Day.**

---

S. MARK. XVI. 6.

"He is risen ; He is not here."

**Introduction.**—When we wander through a Churchyard and look at the tombstones, or go into a Church and examine the old monuments, we see one heading to them all :—

—"Hic jacet." *or* "Here lies."—

Then follows the name, with date of death or burial, and perhaps some praise of the good qualities of the departed.

The epitaph on the tomb of Christ is very different. It is not written in gold, nor cut in stone ; it is spoken by the mouth of the angel, and it is the exact reverse of what is put on all other tombs : "He is not here."

What is there under the sod, beneath the stone, in our grave-yards? The body that has been pampered, the flesh that has been lived for, the greedy belly, the thirsty tongue, the curious eyes, the eager ears, the grasping hand, the idle foot.

What is there that is gone, and come to an end, and lies with the body in the dust? The base ambitions, the worldly cares, the petty conceits, the pride of place and station, the greed of praise. What is there that is not here? The soul, the love of God, the spirit of prayer, the alms and good deeds laid up as treasure in Heaven, the patient continuance in well doing, many a suffering meekly borne, many a tear. All that belongs to the soul, all that aspires to God, all that concerns the life of the spirit,—all that lives is risen and is not here, but all that was earth-born, sensual, grovelling, is here, and ‘Hic jacet’ is written over it.

**Subject.**—Easter Day teaches us to live for that which has the germ of resurrection in it, and to mortify all that which contains in itself the seed of death.

1. Whatever is of the world dies. I am not going to preach you a long sermon this Easter Day, but I want to give you all some plain truths to carry away with you, and which you may associate with the great mystery of Easter.

There are two great conflicting principles in this universe—the power of Death and the power of Life,—in a word, Decay and Resurrection.

We may live for one or the other. We may keep to ourselves those things whose end is Death, or we may form a treasure of those which must live.

Have you ever heard of the white ants? In India these little creatures attack wood and clothes, and they will in a night eat out the inside of the legs of a chair, table and bed, so that they are resolved to dust, and when touched fall to pieces. Now suppose a man were to go on collecting wooden furniture. One night the white ants would enter his house, and in the morning all his goods would be reduced to dust. Well, so may we collect here perishable goods, and one night will suffice to write a 'Hic jacet' over them all. In India people have to consider the devastation committed by the white ants, and to procure things they do not destroy, or take measures against them. So should we consider in whatever we undertake, whatever we set our hearts on, whatever we accumulate about us—will that black ant Death eat it all up and reduce it to powder?—or will it stand?

Now it is quite true that we must care for the things of this world. We cannot help it. We must lay up earthly goods. We cannot do otherwise without blame. We have our business in the world, our worldly duties and our worldly vocations. Of course we know that we cannot carry our carpentering tools, or our trowels, or our ploughs and garners, or our clerks' pens and desks, or our bales of cotton or yarn with us, beyond the grave,

but for all that we must think of them. Quite right. Only—

I will tell you something more. The people in India who want to preserve things from the white ants, put them in camphor-wood boxes. The little insects hate the scent of camphor, and will not touch this wood, nor penetrate inside to eat up what is contained within.

Now for my advice—put all your worldly business and plans into camphor-wood boxes,—and then Death will not eat them up and reduce them to powder. You do not understand me. I must explain myself.

S. Paul tells us that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all in the Name of Christ. He would have us begin and close every day with prayer, and begin every week with the invocation of Christ upon it, and end it with a thanksgiving, thus all—even eating and drinking, the vulgarest and most perishable of all things—would be done to the glory of God. Now his advice is, Consecrate everything, scent every act of your life with the Name of Christ. Just as you put lavender with your clothes to keep away moths, so put the Name of Christ with all your acts, to make them smell sweet to God, and to preserve them to eternal life. And make every day a camphor-box, by beginning and ending it with prayer, then it will shut in all your acts during the day, and keep them safe, and make them sweet, and they will be blessed of God, however humble and ordinary they may be.



That, then, is my first piece of advice to you. Consecrate all your work and harmless pleasures by making camphor-wood boxes—365 little boxes, all sweet, in the year!—and all safe from the tooth of Death. You will meet all these harmless acts of a lifetime in the future world, and find that in living in this world you have been living to the world to come.

II. It will not do for you to be content with this. My second piece of advice to you is to lay in a store of quite imperishable goods. This you may do by living to the spirit, by praying to God to give you His grace most abundantly, by frequenting the Sacraments, by cultivating the Spiritual life, by meditation, or the reading of pious books. Think of God, talk to God, try more and more to love God. Let the soul, which is the breath of God in you, have free scope. Live for the things of the spirit and mortify the deeds of the body. Then—when Death comes, all who have known you can stand round your grave and say—‘Here lies what was little regarded, that inferior part which was made of the dust, but *he*—the true man, with all his heart’s desires, with the object for which he lived, is not here. He is risen.’

---

XXIX

*THE TWIN-BROTHER OF THOMAS.*

*1st Sunday after Easter.*

---

S. JOHN XX. 24.

"Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus."

**Introduction.**—S. Thomas, who doubted our Lord's Resurrection, and insisted on tangible proof that He was risen from the dead, is also called by the Greek name of Didymus, which means, as Thomas itself does in Hebrew, "a twin."


It is curious that we are not told anything about his twin-brother or sister. Whether his brother—if he had one—was among the apostles or disciples we do not know, whether his sister—if he had one—was one of the devout women who followed Christ, we do not know. One can hardly believe that he kept the nickname of Thomas the Twin, if his twin-brother or sister had died in

infancy, or was unknown to the apostles. There is generally a great sympathy between twins, and often a great similarity in outward appearance and in character. It is therefore not unlikely that the other twin was a follower of Christ.

But if we do not know who the twin-brother or sister of Thomas was, after the flesh, I cannot but think that he has plenty of twin-brothers and sisters in the spirit. And we have not got to go far to look for them.

**Subject.**—Thomas has a twin-brother in everyone who is doubting and slow of belief. Now then ! I must walk out all Thomas's twin-brothers and sisters to-day and give them a lesson. There are some of them here in this congregation. I am going to give you a lesson on Faith.

1. Faith is the foundation without which there can be no Christian life. In the Book of Numbers we read that God punished the Israelites with a plague of fiery serpents, for murmuring against Moses, and from their sting the people died. Then, when Moses interceded for them, God bade him set up a brazen serpent on a pole, and bid those who had been stung look on this image, and they who looked were made whole. God could of course have healed them in some other way, but this He chose, and the people must accept his appointment or die. So God could save us otherwise than by faith if He chose, but He has not chosen. He has bidden us believe if we will be saved, so we must accept His condition, or be lost.



Then again, the looking up at the pole and brazen serpent wrought no instantaneous cure, but it was the beginning of the cure. From the moment the wounded man looked, the poison began to leave his veins, the sore to cool, and his fever to disappear. So faith is not both the beginning and end of salvation, it is the beginning only, and that is all. Faith is the foundation stone on which the edifice of the Christian life rests, but it is not foundation and walls and roof in one. Nor is faith instantaneous in its effect. A wealthy man called Beckford built a magnificent house once, and had it reared in an incredibly short space of time, as several hundreds of workmen were engaged on it night and day, building by torchlight. It looked magnificent when reared, but it tumbled down in a few months, and I believe nothing now remains of "Beckford's Folly." Some people suppose that to believe is all; and that when they have admitted that Christ came to save them, the building of their Christian life is reared like magic. Wait a little, and down it will come, and Smith's or Brown's or Jones's Folly will be as much and as speedily a ruin as that of which I have told you. No, in the Christian life we must build slowly, and allow for settlement, or the edifice will be full of cracks, and will fall.

III. Faith must be intelligent. "We must know in what we have believed," says the Apostle. I am much afraid that among Christians—among Church people, there is very little knowledge about what they are called on to believe. When men are going to travel great

distances where little or no food is procurable, they take with them portable meat or soup, which consists of nourishing food steamed down to an essence, all the most sustaining part in meat reduced to the very smallest size possible, so as to be easily carried by the traveller. Well, the Church has done this for us, and in the Creeds we have the whole truth of Revelation, all that which God requires us to believe, steamed down to an essence, which every child can carry about with him in his memory.

But faith must be intelligent. It is not enough to know what we are called on to believe and repeat it. We must do our utmost to understand our Creed.

The Faroese islanders live the greater part of the year in a fog, and they have fifteen different names for fifteen sorts of fogs they get shrouded in. A good number of us live in fogs of vague belief, and as many articles as such persons have in their creed, so many sorts of fog have they into which they get. Our faith will not profit us much unless it be definite, sharp of outline, distinct in colour, clear-seeing, and intelligent.

III. Faith must be without doubt. The twin-brothers of Thomas are great doubters. They say—Well, it is very possibly true, but we do not know for certain,—when any of the verities of the Christian belief are pounded. They half believe and half disbelieve. They believe what they understand and do not believe what they do not understand. Consequently their faith is

infirm, there is no strength in it. It is a sandy soil on which no superstructure can be erected, and not solid rock. When storm and flood arise, the house goes down, and its ruin is complete.

There was once a saint, who, as a little boy, lived with his uncle, who was a heretic, and disbelieved most of the Christian truths. But he sent the boy to school, and there the child learned the Creed. One day his uncle took him on his knee and asked him what he had acquired in school. So the little fellow began "I believe—," then his uncle was angry and beat him, but the child said, "Uncle, why do you strike me for saying that?—It is all true." The lesson taught in early life stuck in his soul, and he grew up a good, faithful man. One day, in after years, as he was travelling, some heretics fell upon him, and one with an axe cut him down. He dropped on the ground, but picked himself up on his knees, and half stunned with the blow, dipped his finger in his blood and wrote in the dust, "I believe—" and then another blow of the axe cut open his head, and he fell on his face with his lips on the words he had written—"I believe."

"Be thou faithful unto death," says Christ, "and I will give thee a crown of life." But to be faithful, one must know what to believe, and one must hold that fast without wavering.

XXX.

*B E S E T T I N G   S I N S .*

*2nd Sunday after Easter.*

---

S. JOHN X. 16.

"Other sheep I have."

**Introduction.**—During the last two or three years the farmers have been sorely afflicted, and notably in the West of England, with a disease which has swept away great numbers of sheep, so that in some places scarce a sound animal remains. The disease is caused by a little parasite, vulgarly called a "fluke," which lives in the liver of the sheep. Now when this fluke first enters it is very small, almost microscopic, and there it lies, it does not stir, but simply lives, and gradually exhausts the life out of the animal. The blood grows thin, the muscles are relaxed, the sheep loses flesh, its very wool wants quality, it goes

on browsing for months; at one time, when there is rich fresh herbage, it seems to be recovering, but no! the fluke is still there, the evil is not cured; then comes a relapse, and at last, one morning early, the shepherd comes out, and finds the wretched creature lying stiff in the wet grass,—stone dead.

**Subject.**—I am going to address you, to-day—you sheep of Christ's fold, on a disease which afflicts you—a disease to which all Christian sheep are liable, and which very much resembles that of which I have been speaking. There is something—a parasite, which finds its way into a great many Christian hearts, and lies there, and drains it of its life-blood, and destroys its energies, and, unless expelled, kills it, and the name of that fluke is—the Besetting Sin.

#### 1. The Besetting Sin.

Each has his own. Some have a great number of sins to contend with, but, as a general rule, every man has his own special besetting sin, one to which he is most prone, one which endangers his spiritual life more than any other. Now what I mean by the Besetting Sin is this one particular tendency to evil which each of you has. There are some people who have a tendency to gout born in them, others with a tendency to insanity, others with a tendency to consumption, others with a tendency to heart-complaint. Such have to be very careful, and avoid such



food or exercises, or such amusements, or such exposure, as is likely to bring on their besetting sickness. In their veins, or lungs, or bones, lies the malady lurking, only waiting for incaution, to lay hold, and reduce to suffering and a sickbed, the person in whom it lurked. Just so, we have all of us a besetting tendency to some spiritual malady. You know that some children, whose parents have been intemperate, often inherit a craving for drink, and then—in their throats burns this fire for strong spirits, and if it be given way to, that is the beginning of their ruin. It has to be resisted vigorously. They know it is there, and they know the inevitable result if they yield. That is their Besetting Temptation. When once it is given way to, the Temptation has grown into a Sin.

Now I do not pretend to see into all your hearts, and to tell you what the Besetting Temptations or Besetting Sins lurking there are. In some it is vanity. In some envy. In some discontent. In some avarice. In some indolence. In some bad temper. There are various flukes for the human heart, but they all produce the same results, they all drain the spiritual life out of the soul, and make it listless, and destroy its power of growth, and healthy exertion.

You are the best veterinary surgeons to your own cases, and I bid you most earnestly to look into your own hearts, examine them—not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God—but very seriously, and with

earnest desire to find out what the fluke is there that is doing you harm. Ask God to enable you to see. Call down the Holy Spirit to help you to discern aright ; and go carefully over your thoughts, your acts, your deeds, and have no rest till you have laid your finger on your Besetting Sin, and know what it is.

II. When you know your Besetting Sin, then look for a remedy. Now here it is that I advise you to seek advice. Your clergyman is set by Christ as the physician of your souls, and he should know how to deal with them, and what spiritual medicines to apply. But the first thing of all is to know your Besetting Sin, and the second thing is to pray God to enable you to overcome and kill it. Knowing what it is, you know exactly what to ask strength to oppose. That is the second thing. The third is—to avoid all those occasions, and all those associations which tend to make it grow. If you have a tendency to consumption, you will stand in risk of having it lay hold of your lungs if you are careless about getting wet feet, and going, when hot, into a draught ; and so, if you have a tendency to some Besetting Sin, you will have to keep out of all such society, and such surroundings, as are likely to be dangerous.

And the fourth thing is, to resist the temptation by might and main, and make up your mind not to give way.

These are general maxims. If you want particular

directions, you must go to a spiritual physician for them. Let me repeat.

**First :—**Know your Besetting Sin—find it out by self-examination.

**Secondly :—**Pray for special grace to overcome it.

**Thirdly :—**Avoid all dangerous occasions.

**Fourthly :—**Resist the tendency within vigorously.

**Conclusion.**—I think I can promise you, if you will follow these rules, that you will kill your fluke—that you will master your Besetting Sin, and by degrees recover your spiritual energies, your spiritual life will be again vigorous, and your spiritual appetite for the Blessed Sacrament, which is the food of the soul, will be active and urgent. May God in His mercy bless the words I have said, that the sheep of this fold may not die of their Besetting Sins, and He be obliged to call other sheep to take their places in the pastures He has prepared for them.

---

XXXI

*CHILDREN OF GOD AND OF THE WORLD.*

*3rd Sunday after Easter*

---

S. JOHN XVI. 20

"Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

**Introduction.**—It would almost seem to us as though in this world there were ranged two realms in hostility with each other, just as, since the moment of probation in Heaven, the angelic host has been separated into two hostile camps.

On one side is the kingdom of the good, of those faithful to God, and on the other side is the kingdom of the children of this world, and of evil. On one side the descendants in spirit of the obedient Abel, on the other of the disobedient Cain. And what is more, the tendencies of each are diverse.

The former seek that which is above, and is heavenly ;  
the latter that which is beneath, and is earthly.

The former seek to obey in all things the Will of God ;  
the latter follow always their own wills.

And so my text speaks of these two classes—or camps  
—or kingdoms. Ye—the children of God—shall weep  
and lament, but the children of the world shall rejoice.

In Revelation we have the reverse. Babylon has  
fallen, and the kings of the earth, and all who have lived  
luxuriously in her, cast dust on their heads, and cry, say-  
ing, Alas, alas that great city ! But, on the other hand,  
the sons of God, the much people in heaven, shout with  
a great voice, saying, “ Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and  
honour, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and  
righteous are His judgments, and He hath avenged the  
blood of His servants at her hand.”

**Subject.**—And yet, this is not altogether the case. The  
two kingdoms are not sharply divided from one another,  
but are in process of arrangement.

1. When Satan rebelled in heaven, there was war.  
How long it lasted we know not, perhaps the revolt and  
the fall were instantaneous. “ I saw Satan, like lightning,  
fall from heaven,” said our Lord, and like lightning may  
have been the whole transaction. For a moment all the  
angels were on trial, the one question was Obedience or

Disobedience, and in one moment they decided on which side they would be, on the side of God, or on the side of the rebel. After that moment of choice the two camps were formed, and the fates of the angels fixed for all eternity. You know, no doubt, decisive moments in your lives, when you have had instantly to make choice what you will do. They were, perhaps, turning-points in your lives. And when you had made your election there was no going back. It was so with the angels. They were given their choice, Fidelity or Revolt. They had free wills, and their wills vibrated slightly from side to side, and then fixed themselves definitely. That decision determined whether they were to be Angels or Devils.

But it is not so with men. Our eternal condition is not determined by any instantaneous election. We do not instantly choose whether we shall be children of God or children of the world.

It is true that all of us, at our baptism, are placed in the Kingdom of God, just as all the angels whom God created were placed in heaven. But throughout our life we are wavering from side to side, or gradually and surely inclining to one side or the other. Perhaps for a little time we swing in the wrong direction, but then rally and go to the right side, then sway back wrong, then recover a little, and go a little more right, but relapse again to the left, and then after a few more feeble efforts to recover our right place, settle down on the left hand. Or the

contrary may take place. We may resolve to take our side with God, on the right, but something attracts us very much on the other side, and we gradually approach it, in time we see where we are going, conquer our longing, and resume the place we had deserted. Then, again, the desire comes on us, and we creep out of our proper positions, but not so far, and more easily recover ourselves, and so on, till at last the very desire to go over the boundary dies away, and we remain unchangeable in our right-hand place as children of God.

II. Now look at the tendencies of the two sides.

What one likes, the other dislikes. What one pursues, the other shuns. When one weeps, the other laughs. They turn their faces in opposite directions. Those who are the children of God seek those things which are above. Those who are the children of the world mind earthly things. The first love prayer, and the word of God, and sacraments. The latter love dissipation, riot, and revelry. The former try to overcome the flesh, with its affections and lusts. The latter do all in their power to stifle the spirit, with its heavenly and pure aspirations.

S. Paul gives us in contrast the lives of the two parties. In the first we find the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. In the latter we come across adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions,

heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings.

Consequently, they live two different sorts of lives, the first a life of self-restraint, the latter a life of self-indulgence. The first live for things eternal, that never perish, the second live for things that perish in the using, that are of the day only.

III. But be very careful not to judge for yourselves who are on the right, and who on the left, who are the children of God, and who the children of the world. Judge nothing before the time, we are warned, for till the Great Day shall reveal every man's work, we have not the power of judging correctly. The utmost we can say is that some persons shew a strong tendency to go over to the world, whereas others certainly seem to us to be living as becomes the children of God.

There is no clean and clearly defined severance here. The borderland between both is crowded with members of both camps, crossing and re-crossing.

I was once at a great gathering, at a foundation-stone laying, and a very wise old man whom I knew looked round at all who were there, and said, "This is much like what it will be on the Great Day, those one made sure of meeting are not with us, and those whom one did not expect to see are here."

---



XXXII.

*A CHILD-LIKE SPIRIT.*

**4th Sunday after Easter.**

---

S. JOHN XV. 10.

"I go to My Father."

**Introduction.**—What an unalterable yearning of love that must have been in the Heart of Christ towards His Father, as the days of His ministry drew to a close.

The work which My Father gave Me to accomplish, I have done, I have shewn forth His light, I have taught His will, I have manifested His compassion to the world, and, now this is finished, "I go to My Father."

I have been in the world for thirty-three years. I have suffered cold and hunger, I have not had where to lay My head, though foxes have had holes and the birds of the

air their nests, I have been as a worm and no man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but now all this is ended, "I go to My Father." I have withheld nothing from the cruelty of wicked men, I have given My back to the smiters, My cheek to them that plucked off the hair, I gave My hands and My feet to be pierced with nails, My eyes to be bandaged, My brow to be torn with the thorny crown, My feet to be transfixed. I withheld not My lips from the vinegar and gall, nor My side from the soldier's spear,—but now the work of atonement is over. It behoved Me, the Christ, to suffer, now I go to Him that sent Me, I enter into My glory, "I go to My Father." I go to My Father, that I may receive the reward for what I have done and suffered. He will commit all payment into my hands. He will crown Me with glory as risen and ascended Man. I go to My Father that I may prepare places for My chosen, that I may send down good gifts upon men, that I may communicate the Holy Ghost to My Church, that I may feed faithful souls with the Bread of Heaven.

**Subject.**—The child-like spirit should be ever in us, so that throughout life we may ever look up to God as our Father, ever yearn to see His face, ever seek to do His will, ever strive to go to Him.

1. The whole of life is indeed a going to the Father. He has sent us, like Christ, into the world, with our set task to perform, and we must strive to fulfil our vocation,

so as to be able in the end to go to His Father and say, "The work which Thou gavest me to do, I have finished." We are sent into this world to glorify God. Let each of us try to go to our Father in the end, and be able to say with Christ, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." We are sent among men that we may manifest to them the precious name of God, and communicate to them those good things that we have received. Let each of us at the last be able to say with Christ, "I have manifested Thy name unto men—the words which Thou gavest me I have given unto them."

The whole of life is a going to the Father. "Unto Thee shall all flesh come." From infancy to old age we are treading along a road which has but one ending. There is a black gate at the end, and through that we must pass, but beyond is the Just Judge. To Him we are going, bearing with us the record of our daily work, to receive a reward according as our work shall be.

This life is a school in which from early morning to late at eve we are learning. And when the bell rings for the end of school, then we pack up our things, and we go home to the Father, and He asks, Well, what have you learned? Give an account of the day's schooling. What have you acquired? Have the day's hours been spent in work, or spent in play? Give an account.

11. The spiritual life should be a going to the Father. The soul is the divine element in you, and the soul should

be daily trained to draw nearer and nearer to its source, which is God.

The whole of life should be a gaining of what is divine and spiritual and eternal in you, over what is worldly and carnal and perishable. The soul should stretch out her hands unto God and seek to see Him, wiping all that obscures the sight from the eyes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The soul should hunger and thirst for God, Who alone can satisfy the hungry with good things. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The soul should seek first the kingdom of God, through humility, even, if need be, through persecution. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

III. I go to my Father in fear, and in love. In fear, because He is just. In love, because He is merciful. In fear, because He expects every man to use the talents entrusted to him, and to account for what he has done with them. In love, because He is not extreme to mark what is done amiss. In fear, because He hateth iniquity. In love, because He pardoneth sinners.

I go to my Father in trust, for He careth for me. I go on my way with confident heart, knowing that His grace is sufficient for me, that He will in no wise reject even

the prodigal son who repents and says, "I will arise and go unto my Father."

I go to my Father in faith, because I am His child by adoption and grace. He has accepted me as His child through Jesus Christ, He has given me His Spirit. I know that him that cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out. I know that "God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that the world through Him might be saved."

And I go to my Father, using the very prayer taught me by Christ, whereby I am emboldened to call Him my Father, which is in Heaven, and to ask of Him all I need, knowing that by virtue of His promise, that which I ask He will assuredly grant.

---

XXXIII.

COMMON PRAYER.

5th Sunday after Easter.

---

S. JOHN XVI. 24.

"Ask, and ye shall receive."

**Introduction.**—When one of you fathers of a family is going away for a long journey, just before starting you are full of thought about what is most necessary for your wife and children to remember, what is most essential for their welfare during your absence, what you wish them to bear in mind,—and you give them instruction in these matters.

Precisely so with Christ. He is about to leave the Church He has founded, not again to be with it in visible presence till the end of the world. A long, long absence ! already more than eighteen hundred years have passed,

and who can say how many more will pass before He returns to His Church? You may well then conceive His eagerness to impart His final instructions to His Church before going, and how that in His last words He told it what was most necessary for it to know and practise.

And this is His urgent advice, as He starts, "Ask!" that is, 'Pray!' "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And to impress this further He precedes the words with "Verily, Verily"—or "I assure you, I do assure you again of this!"

**Subject.**—I am then about to speak to you to-day of the importance of Prayer, but especially of Common Prayer.

1. When our Blessed Lord gives this parting advice to His Church to pray, He speaks in the plural, and not in the singular. He does not say specially, 'Do thou, Peter, pray, and thou, John, ask, and thou, James, and thou, Andrew,' and so on, but He says, "Ask, and ye shall receive :"—that is, Do you all of you together ask, and you shall altogether receive. He exhorts here not to individual, but to common prayer. No doubt whatever about the profit and the duty and the importance of private prayer, but the profit and the duty and the importance are second to public prayer, they are quite subsidiary. So when our Lord gave a pattern of prayer, it was so couched as to show that it was designed for public recitation. It was not "My Father which art in Heaven, give me this

day my daily bread, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil," but "Our Father, give us our daily bread, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil."

Our Lord also promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The meaning is this: Where several are united as a congregation in prayer, there am I kneeling with them in the midst, interceding with and for them. Just as in the Litany the priest kneels at the chancel steps before the congregation, leading their prayers, so wherever there is congregational worship, there is Christ as priest, leading their supplications and offering them to the Father in union with His merits and all-atoning sacrifice.

This is a very great promise, never made to private prayer. It is the special blessing attached to public prayer, to congregational worship.

II. Now think what is lost by those who absent themselves from common prayer. Where Christ is, though invisible, there also is the Holy Spirit, there is Grace, there is the Divine Blessing. And all this missed through laziness, indifference, forgetfulness. Let us look at an instance. On the Sunday on which Christ rose, the disciples were assembled together in the upper room which served as their church, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, whilst they were in prayer.

Then, as He had promised, Jesus was in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." He shewed them



His hands and His side, and again He said, "Peace be unto you : as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Then He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And now what does the Evangelist add, after relating this ? He says—"But Thomas was not with them when Jesus came." The Apostles received the blessing of Peace from the lips of Christ twice spoken—but Thomas was not with them to receive it. The Apostles received the divine commission—but Thomas was not with them to receive it. The Apostles were made glad when they saw the Lord—but Thomas was not with them to rejoice. The Apostles had their faith strengthened by seeing Him alive Whom they had beheld nailed to the cross—but Thomas was not with them, and he doubted. The Apostles were given the Holy Ghost when He breathed on them—but Thomas was not with them to receive the Spirit.

You see what Thomas lost by absenting himself from their assembly for prayer on one Sunday. True, he received his lost privileges by being present on the following Sunday, but think what would have been the case had he been not with the other Apostles on that day also !

Now, my brethren, consider that in public prayer Christ is present interceding along with you, Christ is present giving peace, Christ is present conferring blessings. What do you not lose by being absent ? On the Sunday so many rich and precious blessings were poured on souls, but you were not with them to be blessed. Such words of con-

solation were spoken to those who needed comfort—but you were not with them to be comforted. Such grace was given to strengthen against temptation those who are weak—but you were not with them to be strengthened.

**Conclusion.**—Therefore when I urge you to attend every opportunity of public prayer that offers, I am urging you to do that which Christ urged just before He left this earth, and to which a special promise attaches, for He said, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

---

XXXIV.

*THE VEILED PRESENCE.*

*Ascension Day.*

---

ACTS I. 9.

"A cloud received him out of their sight."

**Introduction.**—The ancient mariners had sailed down the west coast of Africa, but had never succeeded in doubling that Cape which we call now the "Cape of Good Hope." There they met with storms, and suffered wreck, or were driven back by contrary winds, or their hearts failed them at the prospect of entering unknown seas, and they returned to Europe as wise as they went. So the name given to that promontory they could not pass was "the Cape of No Hope," or "the Cape of Bad Hope."

However, in the reign of Emanuel, king of Portugal, a gallant admiral, Vasco di Gama, pushed his way past, and found the road to India and the great ocean with its spice

islands beyond, and then, full of joy, he re-named that promontory he had sailed round, "the Cape of Good Hope," a name it bears to this day.

It seems to me that the ancients before Christ's Resurrection and Ascension were like the old mariners. Before them stood the great rock of Death, and what was beyond they knew not, but they feared greatly to near it. It was to them a Cape of No Hope or Bad Hope, a place of storm, of shipwreck, of defeated expectations, of discouragement. All on this side was known and explored, beyond all was vague and terrible. Then our gallant Admiral, Jesus Christ, passed the Cape and returned, and has announced to all who follow, "This is the way to the Land that flows with milk and honey! This is the way to the land of Gold, this is the way to the Spice Islands. Fear no more, I have doubled the headland, I have explored the course, Death is swallowed up in victory, the kingdom of Heaven is open to all believers, that place of darkness and danger and storm is now, to those who follow Me, the Cape of Good Hope."

**Subject.**—But I am not going to speak to you now about the glorious discoveries made and revealed to us by our Admiral, Jesus Christ. Nor am I going to speak to you of the change effected in the view taken of death by His Resurrection and Ascension. I am going to address you this morning on another point.

When Vasco di Gama sailed away from Portugal, how

many stood on the shore looking after him, waving their farewells, and watching to see the last sight of the daring man who had resolved to explore his unknown seas beyond the point of Hope. And the sea fog hung on the water, and into it the gay vessel sailed and the mist enfolded it, hull and shrouds and sails, and he was seen no more.

When our Lord departed from His Apostles and rose into Heaven, as they stood steadfastly looking up into Heaven, a white cloud came floating through the blue sky, and received Him out of their sight. Thenceforth Christ remains to His Church veiled behind the cloud, and will not be seen again face to face till He comes again to earth.

1. We must remember this, and not expect to see Him in any other way than veiled. His Presence with His Church is veiled, His dealings with souls are veiled, His judgments are veiled, His blessings are veiled. All we see of Him is through a glass darkly.

Before He went away, He promised most solemnly to be with His Church to the end of the world. He promised to remain with it as Guide and source of spiritual blessings, and as a King to receive worship and homage—but,—always veiled. And the cloud that receives Him out of our sight, behind which He enshrouds Himself, is the Sacramental elements. He is with us still, in the Blessed Eucharist, not seen in His Glory, but—veiled. He is with us as King to receive our homage, but behind a cloud, in the Blessed Sacrament. He is with us still, to

feed us with the Bread of Life, but hidden under the Sacramental species.

He keeps His word, He is with us. But He is hidden to the human eye and revealed to the eye of faith, behind the cloud. The carnal mind sees only the cloud, the spiritual vision pierces the cloud, and beholds what is unseen by the world. It is so in all Christ's method with souls for the communication of grace, He is behind the cloud and acts through it, but is only seen acting by faith. In Baptism the carnal eye sees only an empty form, the eye of faith sees sacramental virtue regenerating the soul and ingrafting it into Christ. In Confirmation the fleshly mind sees but a ceremonial ordinance, the spiritual sense sees the Holy Ghost strengthening. The animal man sees in the Blessed Eucharist only material elements, bread and wine, the spiritual man sees the Body and Blood of Christ.

II. Christ is hidden behind a cloud in many other human souls.

Thus pain, misfortunes, great disappointments, are often terribly afflicting to us. We see only our losses, lost health, lost ease, lost means, disappointed expectations, lost labour, ruined hopes, and are beat down to the earth by the waves and storms of adversity going over our heads, but—behind the cloud, behind the storm, walking on the waves, is Christ. When we see trouble He is hid, and out of our disappointment will bring hope, out of our

losses will extract gain ; when we think we see the end, He shews us the beginning.

His blessings are often thus hidden under an adverse outside, His medicines have a bitter taste.

It is said that every cloud has got its silver lining ; certainly above every cloud the sun is shining. Sometimes the sky is so overcast that we cannot even perceive the sun-ball at all, wan and white, yet we know for a certainty he is there shining serenely down out of a cloudless firmament on the dense white vapours which lie low over the face of earth. I have, on a November day when all around was fog, so that I could not see beyond me the length of a bow-shot—climbed a mountain and stepped quite suddenly out of gloom and vapour into brilliant sunshine and cloudless air. Well ! we walk here very often in November fogs and trouble, we cannot see our way, all is buried in mist and uncertain to the sight, but above,—only a little way above, the sun is shining down on it all.

In all our troubles and trials here, let us try to look through the cloud, let us have faith, and believe that Christ is present, though veiled, that He is God over all, blessed for evermore, shining down on us, and that it is only for a time that we walk in mist, and that He is hidden, for the cloud will roll away, our firmament become clear, and then we shall see Him as He is, with no intervening and obscuring veil, for the time of cloud will be past, and the day of seeing face to face will have come.

---

XXXV.

*TRUTHFULNESS.*

*Sunday after Ascension.*

---

S, JOHN XV. 26.

"The Comforter—whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth."

**Introduction.**—When Noah opened the window of the ark, after that the ark had rested on the top of Ararat : "The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were upon the face of the whole earth : then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark." After our Lord had ascended into Heaven, He opened the window and sent forth, as He had promised, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, and that gentle Dove is ever flying hither and thither over the surface of this earth, seeking some truthful heart on which she may rest



the sole of her foot. How many does the Blessed Spirit find? From how many can be plucked the olive-leaf, to show to the Father that there is ground on which the Spirit of Truth may rest? Where is the Spirit of Truth likely to find a lodgment? Among those who are engaged in business? Is business generally conducted on a basis of perfect honesty and truthfulness? Among those who live in pleasure? Are they actuated by a love of truth, and not rather by deception? Is truth to be found always among masters? Often among servants?

**Subject.**—One of the distinguishing features of the presence of this Holy Spirit in the heart of man, is the love of truth. Without truth the Spirit cannot be. The Holy Ghost is emphatically the Spirit of Truth, and with falsehood, deception, prevarication, He cannot abide.

1. The Prophet Elisha had a servant named Gehazi. One day there came to Elisha a great Syrian, named Naaman, troubled with leprosy, desiring to be healed. Elisha sent him to dip seven times in Jordan, and then the flesh of Naaman came again quite sound, as the flesh of a little child. He was full of gratitude for this cure, and desired to make Elisha a present, but the Prophet refused to receive one. So then Naaman drove away. After he was gone, Gehazi thought to himself, "What a pity it is that my master is so indifferent to money, he does not value it, but I do. As for that rich Syrian, he has got as much as he wants and more, I really think

there can be no harm in relieving him of some of his superfluity." So Gehazi ran after Naaman, and overtook him, and said to him, "My master hath sent me after you, saying, Behold, even now there are come to me from mount Ephraim two young men, sons of the Prophets; give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of raiment." Here is a pack of lies! First, Elisha had not sent him; secondly, no young men of Ephraim had come; thirdly, the money and raiment were not for anyone else, but for Gehazi himself. Then Naaman answered, "O no! you shall have two talents of silver, not one," and he gave two sacks of silver and two changes of raiment to two of his servants to carry them home for Gehazi.

Gehazi stored his silver away, and put his two suits of new clothes in his wardrobe, and washed his hands and face, and went up to his master, looking as innocent as he could. Then Elisha asked him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" and he answered, "Thy servant went no whither." That was lie number four. Then Elisha said unto him, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" And he continued to turn Gehazi's mind inside out, and show him that he knew what he had been scheming on his way after Naaman, and how Gehazi had been thinking, "With this money I shall be able to buy a farm, and have olive trees, and grow grapes, and I shall also buy a bit of common on which I can keep sheep. But I must have a dairy. I cannot get on without a dairy. Then, of

course, I shall be a master, and I must have men to dig and plough and keep the sheep, and maid-servants to milk the cows and make the butter." Elisha told him right to his face that this was what he had been thinking, and then followed the punishment: "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed for ever." He did not deprive him of the money—but he inflicted on him this terrible curse along with it. Three lies to Naaman, and three punishments, the leprosy to himself, the leprosy to fall on his children, and the leprosy to be impossible of healing. And one punishment for the lie told to Elisha, the shame of having that lie shown him to his face by his master.

Now, my brethren, you have each of you got your blessed guardian angel, and you may think to deceive him, you may fancy when you speak lies or act falsely that he does not know. Gehazi looked round, and he saw no one who could tell tales of him. He sent away the two servants of Naaman directly they came to the tower, that they might not be witnesses against him. He was quite sure no one could discover the lie, and yet the invisible spirit of the Prophet followed him and saw all.

So with you, whatever you say or do, though you may think you have no witness, your guardian angel will say, What! thou wentest no whither?—Went not my heart with thee?

You may do some act of dishonesty, and suppose it

perfectly concealed, that you have managed so cleverly that detection is impossible. "What! went not my heart with thee? I saw all thy ways."

In your business, what untruth you may have said to pass off what is bad as if it were good, to get for it a price which is above its worth, "What! went not my heart with thee? I saw it all."

II. Indeed, a lie must come out. Falsehood can never so cover up her footsteps as not to be traced.

When the brethren of Joseph had sold their brother into Egypt, they came to their father with a lie in their mouths, saying a wild beast had devoured him. Years passed away, and at last they were forced to come before the old man, and confess that what they had said was a lie. "Joseph," they said, "is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt." With what shame, with what confusion of face must they have stood before their father, when they told him this.

And if not in this life, at least at the last day, that will be our condition, we shall have to stand before our Father, and with utter humiliation and shame confess the lies, the false actions, the false pretences, the equivocations of which we have been guilty in past years.

III. Lastly. Remember that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth, and that unless you be truthful you cannot be called the sons of God. When S. Paul is exhort-

ing to a new life those who have escaped from error and heathenism, this is the order in which he places the Christian graces, they must acquire first, Purity ; secondly, Righteousnes ; thirdly, Truth ; “ Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.”

And remember that when S. John describes to us the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City, he adds : “ There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.”

---

XXXVI.

*DISCIPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

**Whitsunday.**

---

.f.

S. JOHN XIV. 26.

“The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things.”

**Introduction.**—There is nothing more disheartening to a schoolmaster than to teach a class, and to find that all his efforts are thrown away, as the boys are looking out of the window, or playing with slate pencils, or bits of string, or nudging one another, or simply sitting with blank eyes staring into vacuity, thinking of nothing, and not listening at all.

There is nothing more disheartening to a preacher than to find that the instruction he is so desirous to impart, falls on the ears, but does not sink into the heart

of his hearers. Both teacher and pastor soon discover that their utmost efforts are of no avail, that they may speak their loudest, and rack their brains to instruct interestingly, but that they can do nothing, nothing but exhaust themselves, unless in the hearts of their hearers there be a readiness to hear.

**Subject.**—When our Lord left this world, He did not leave it without a teacher. He sent the Holy Ghost to be the great Instructor of men. It is the Holy Spirit of God, ever dwelling in the Church, Who teaches through the mouth of the Church, Who sows the seed of Christian Doctrine in the souls of men, and Who appeals to their consciences to do works meet for repentance. I remember an old clergyman, now dead, said to me one day very sadly, “I have been for fifty years engaged in teaching Christian verities, in sowing the seed of God, and, on my word, it seems to me as if the seed had been scalded before it was given me, because it seems to have no life in it, I sow, and sow, and none comes up.”

Well! many a sower has had sad disappointments, still, he must not be discouraged. The trial to his faith is great, but he must remember that our Blessed Lord fared no better. After His ministry—when He died, it really seemed as if the eleven Apostles and a few faithful women were all the result of His teaching.

I say, we must not be discouraged, we must leave the

matter to God. It is not we, it is the Holy Ghost Who is the Teacher, we are but the mouth-pieces, through whom the Divine Spirit speaks, and He cannot instruct unless there be a readiness to hear. As the seed will not spring up where there is no soil, so the divine word will not lodge where there is no heart open to receive it.

1. Now let us see what are the characteristics of a true disciple of the Holy Ghost, of a hearer on His bench, a pupil in His school. First: There must be *Attention*. No master can teach anything to an inattentive class, and not an angel could make anyone learn unless he paid attention to what was taught. There was a king named Ptolemy. To him was brought a list of persons who had been engaged in a conspiracy, whom the judge had found guilty, and they awaited the king's approval before sentencing them to death. The king was engaged at a game of draughts, and was much interested in his game. He pushed one of his draught-men, and said, 'Yes, yes! read me the names, and I will say who are to live and who to die—there, that is my move.'

Then the queen, who was sitting by, started up, and struck the draught-board off the table, and said, "Sire! when human lives are at stake, you must listen with both ears, and with undivided attention."

Now the great truths which the Holy Spirit teaches concern something more than human lives, they concern immortal souls, they do not concern the souls of others



only, but of your own especially. How do you listen? Are you playing draughts? Are you thinking of trifles? Are you giving only one ear, and only half attention? If so, then no wonder that what is taught teaches *you* nothing, no wonder that the word spoken profits not the hearer, no wonder that Christian teaching, like the word of peace, not finding the teachable spirit, returns to him who instructed.

II. The second characteristic of a pupil in the school of the Holy Spirit who profits by the teaching is *Readiness*, that is, interest taken in what is taught. I do not think that a disciple is likely to make any advance in anything that he is taught, unless he take an eager interest in his lesson, and generally his progress corresponds to the amount of interest which he takes. Now you can very well see for yourselves whether you feel an interest in Christian doctrine. You have only to examine yourselves, and you will find out. Every one can tell whether he has an appetite for his food or not, for if he go without a meal and feel hungry, then he knows he has a healthy appetite. But if he feel squeemish, and pick at his food and fancy this or that which he has not got, and when it is procured for him, turn away from it, then he has got an unhealthy appetite, or no appetite at all.

In like manner, with regard to spiritual instruction. If you be eager and hungry for the Word of God, very well, then you have that readiness to hear which befits a

disciple in the school of the Holy Ghost, but if you feel a disgust for it, then you have not that quality which is essential to a learner.

III. The third characteristic of a disciple of the Holy Ghost is—*Practice of what is learned.* “If any of you be a hearer of the Word,” says S. James, “and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” Therefore “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

Why does God the Holy Ghost teach you? In order that you may profit, that you may use the teaching imparted. If, however, you are content with hearing, and never practise what you are taught, then—you might just as well never listen.

God the Holy Ghost is not only our teacher, He is also our Sanctifier, and the object of His teaching is our sanctification. He teaches those truths, the knowledge of which conduce to our sanctification, but if we simply absorb the truths and are no better for them, then all the teaching is thrown away.

There is in one of the Ægean islands a fissure in the

ground, and into this the sea runs. It has been running in for a hundred years to the knowledge of man, and still the sea goes running in and never fills that vast cavern, or whatever it is into which the water rushes. There are not a few Christians who are great absorbers of Christian teaching, but there their Christianity begins and ends; into their ears we pour—pour—pour any amount of good doctrine and earnest exhortation, and they sit composedly and suck it all in, but not a sign do they shew in their lives that it has done them any good.

**Conclusion.**—These then are the three essential characteristics of pupils in the school of the Blessed Spirit, *Attention, Eagerness to receive, and the Putting in practice* of what they do receive.

---

END OF VOL. I.

## SERMONS BY THE REV. S. BARING GOULD.

**VILLAGE PREACHING FOR A YEAR**; a complete collection of Sixty-five specially-written Short Sermons for all the Sundays and Chief Holydays of the Christian Year, Missions, Schools, Harvest, Club, etc.; with a supplement of Twenty Sermon Sketches.

This most complete and excellent Series of Sermons forms a perfect storehouse of Teaching, Illustration, and Anecdote for the Whole Year, and will be found an invaluable aid to the Preacher in Country Towns and Villages.

*Complete in 2 vols., elegant cloth, 10/-, by post 10/7.*

*Vol. I. separately, from Advent to Whit-Sunday, 5/-, by post 5/4*

*Vol. II. separately, Miscellaneous, from Trinity } 5/-, by post 5/4  
to Advent, also 20 Sermon Sketches*

"Thoroughly excellent, and admirably calculated to excite the interest of a village congregation, while the great doctrines of the Christian Faith are clearly and boldly set forth."—*Guardian*.

"They are exquisite, most suggestive, and among the most remarkable sermons of the day."—*Literary Churchman*.

"Sound in doctrine, vigorous and telling in expression, devout in feeling, yet abounding in illustration and anecdote."—*John Bull*.

"We strongly recommend them to the clergy, who will gather from them many a hint how to make use of anecdote, illustration, scraps of personal experience, &c., in their pulpit teaching . . . Always interesting and effective."—*Church Times*.

"Short, sketchy, and wonderfully graphic—model sermons."

—*English Churchman*.

"These brilliant sermons will be really valuable to the clergy, they suggest innumerable novel trains of thought, and their illustrations are lavish and singularly beautiful."—*Church Quarterly*.

**SERMONS TO CHILDREN.** A specially-written Series, twenty-three in number, including a Set of Six on CHILDREN'S DUTIES and FAULTS (Tidiness, Idleness, Wilfulness, Obedience, Perseverance, Idle Talk, &c.), and also a Set of Four on the Seasons of the Year. The very practical lessons for everyday life, combined with the picturesque language, the rich store of anecdotes, and the unflinching interest of these Sermons, will render them not only useful in Church, but most valuable and instructive for School Readings, or Prizes, or for Birthday or other Home Gift Books for children of all ages and classes. *Cloth, price 3/6, by post 3/10.*

"These are really sermons suited for children, alike in mode of thought, simplicity of language, and lessons conveyed, and they are very beautiful. No mere critical description can do justice to the charm with which spiritual and moral lessons are made to flow (not merely are drawn) out of natural facts or objects. Stories, too, are made use of with admirable taste; and the lessons taught are, without exception, sound and admirable. We cannot doubt that the volume will be, and will remain, a standard favourite."—*Church Quarterly*.

By the Rev. S. Baring Gould, (continued).

**THE PREACHER'S POCKET.** A Volume of Sermons  
Cr. 8vo, cloth, price 5/-, by post 5/4.

*The Author has specially endeavoured in each one of this collection of Sermons to provide some material really calculated to set people thinking. He trusts that they will serve the country Clergy with ideas which their own opinions of the wants of their people will enable them to adapt to even the most homely requirements.*

"Will serve country clergy with ideas which they can adapt to even their humble requirements, and will prove of assistance to hard-worked town clergy, who cannot do better than take these sermons on the whole as a model for their own compositions."—*Church Times*.

"We commend most heartily these sermons, as being models of a lucid style of poetic language, of definite arrangement and distinctness of teaching. Few books will be more helpful and suggestive to the over-worked pastors of our town parishes."—*Eccelesiastical Gazette*.

**THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING.** A Course of Lectures. (1. The Mystery of Suffering. 2. The Occasion of Suffering. 3. The Capacity for Suffering. 4. Suffering Educative. 5. Suffering Evidential. 6. Suffering Sacrificial.) Third edition.  
Square crown 8vo., cloth, price 3/6, by post 3/9.

"Striking and admirable in a very high degree. If any reader desires to find this great problem treated with boldness, and yet with reverence; with scientific knowledge of fact, and with the happy perspicuity that amounts to poetic genius, he cannot do better than seek it in these lectures."—*Literary Churchman*.

"Those who heard these sermons will welcome the opportunity now given them of again studying truths, whose nobility and depth were at the time almost obscured by the extreme beauty of the vesture in which they were clothed. Very seldom indeed are beauties, as many and varied, to be found in large folio volumes as are here united in one little book."—*John Bull*.

By REV. H. J. WILMOT BUXTON.

Price 5/-, by post 5/4, A new and original volume of **SHORT PLAIN SERMONS.**

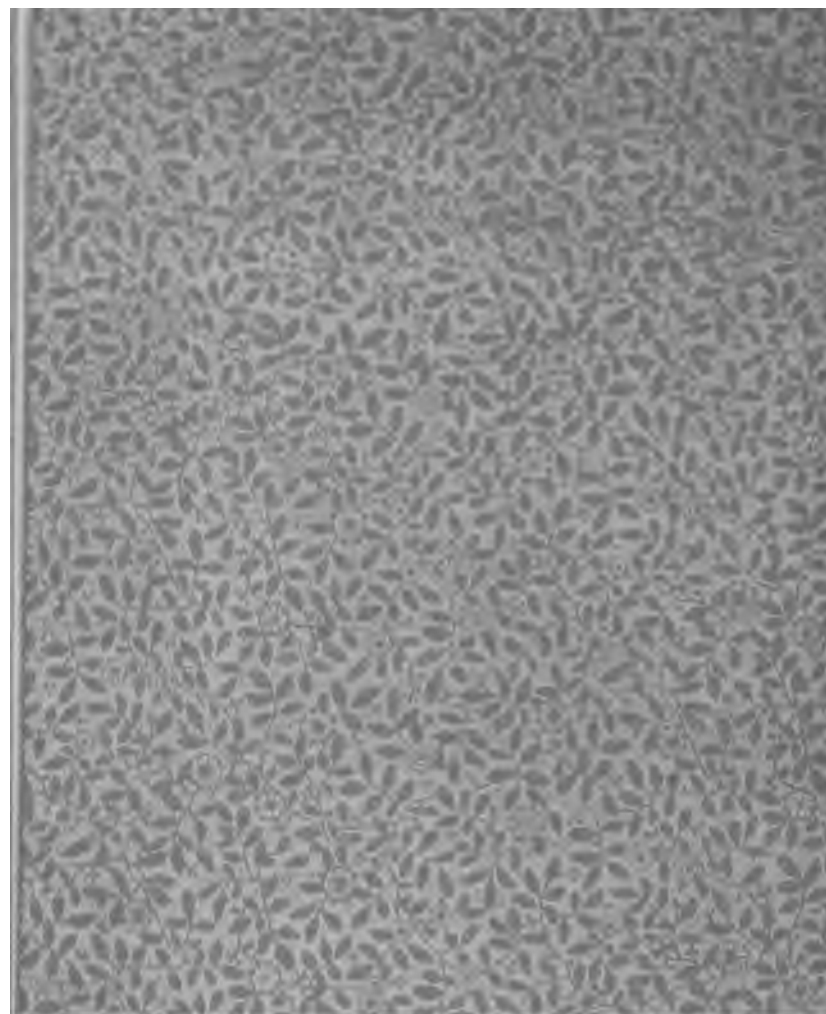
**THE LORD'S SONG**, and other Plain Sermons, consisting of Twenty-two Sermons suggested by well-known Hymns, including several for Children's Services. The Sermons mainly follow the course of the Church's Seasons. Among the Titles we may mention The Long Journey—The Bright Morning—The Dark Evening—The Warfare—The Wanderer—The True Friend.

It is hoped that these Sermons will be welcome, and especially useful in suggesting some novelty for Parish Preaching.

**MISSION SERMONS FOR A YEAR**, including Sixty-eight Short Plain Sermons, for every Sunday, a few Saints' Days, Harvest, Missions, Funeral, Dedication Festival, &c. Price 7/6, by post 8/2

LONDON: W. SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY, W. 67





1

2

3



